KAMMA VIPAKA

(The Results of One's Moral Actions)

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Preface

The present work is a translation of the Sinhala book entitled ‘Kamma Vipaka’, written by Ven. Ridīyagama Sudhammābhivaṃsa. The original book has proven very popular in Sri Lanka and has been reprinted more than one hundred times.

The main message of the work is that we are responsible for the moral quality of our actions. Stories have been drawn from various traditional Buddhist sources and the original author has arranged them thematically. A feature of this stratum of Buddhist literature is the extensive use of lists. In earlier days the stories were passed down aurally and it would have been easier for the listeners remember information so organized.

We would like to share merits with Mr. W.M. Samarakoon who firstly took a lot of pains in making the English draft of the book and then Ven. Galgedara Tikkhindriya and Ven. Beragama Dhammadeva in giving assistance when and where necessary, as well as Ven. Irish Sumedha who extensively edited the English text. Ven. Canadian Jinaratana also helped with proofreading a later draft of the book.

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Finally, we would like to share merits with with all of our venerable teachers, living and dead, who have given us support in our monastic life.

May all beings rejoice in this merit and attain to the peace of Nibbāna as swiftly as possible.

Ven. Sīlagama Ñāṇasiri

Nā Uyana Aranya Senāsanaya

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Introduction

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammā Sambuddhassa!!!

> ***Kammassakomhi kammadāyādo kammayoni***
> ***kammabandhu kammapaṭisaraṇo.***
> ***Yaṃ kammaṃ karissāmi***
> ***kalyāṇaṃ vā pāpakaṃ vā***
> ***tassa dāyādo bhavissāmī'ti***
> ***abhiṇhaṃ paccavekkhitabbaṃ***
> ***itthiyā vā purisena vā***
> ***gahaṭṭhena vā pabbajitena vā.***
> ***(AN 5:57 Ṭhāna / Abhiṇhapaccavekkhitabbaṭhāna Sutta)***

May all our veneration be accepted by the most powerful, ultimately kind, and honourable *Buddha* who illuminated the whole world! A *Pāḷi* stanza quoted from the *Abhiṇhapaccavekkhana Sutta* is given above. Its meaning is that each being owns the effect of each deed done, and that *kamma* will be the main and root reason for the comforts and sufferings experienced by the doer. *Kamma* differs from person to person and is one's relative and refuge. So, if one does any good or bad kamma the result will be reaped only by oneself. The Blessed One said that it is essential for every man, woman or one gone forth to keep this principle, called the *Dhamma* to *Nibbāna*, in mind.

In order to appreciate the full meaning of the above verses we need to further understand:

1. What is *kamma*?
2. What is good *kamma* and bad *kamma*?
3. How does *kamma* affect us?

1. In Buddhism, the mind is the key to *kamma*. The *Buddha* has taught: "*Cetanāhaṃ, bhikkhave, kammaṃ vadāmi.*" It carries the meaning: "*Bhikkhus*, I here state that the intention for doing an act is *kamma,*" i.e. *kamma* differs according to the intention.
2. Some categories of good *kamma* are: *tīṇi puñña kiriyavatthu* (the three meritorious activities), *dasa kusala dhamma* (the ten wholesome activities) and *dasa pāramī dhamma* (the ten perfections).

Categories of bad *kamma* are breaking the five precepts, *dasa akusala dhamma* (the ten unwholesome activities) and engaging in wicked trades.

So, good *kamma* will cause comfort and bad *kamma* will cause suffering as well as remorse over the bad that one has done. The results we receive from good *kamma* are called *ānisaṃsā* (benefits) and the results from bad *kamma* remain bad.

3. It is mentioned that there are four possible conditions in which the *kamma* may, or may not, ripen:

    I. Diṭṭhadhamma Vedanīyā Kamma
    II. Upapajja Vedanīyā Kamma
    III. Aparāpariya Vedanīyā Kamma
    IV. Ahosi Kamma

I. Some results are experienced in this world for some of the kamma that was made here — be it good or bad. This is due to the power of the first impulsion of the cognitive series (javana). The stories of Punnā the beggar, Ciñcamāṇavikā and King Suppabuddha, which will be described later, are examples of this type of result. Just know these as Diṭṭhadhamma Vedanīyā Kamma in short.

II. Some effects may be experienced in the immediately subsequent life for some of the kamma that is made here, in the present life. These are called Upapajja Vedanīyā Kamma and are created by the power of the seventh impulsion of

the cognitive series. Examples include: Devadatta Thero's rebirth in hell, Nanda yakkha's rebirth in hell after assaulting the Arahant Elder Sāriputta, the rebirth in hell of Nanda Manavaka who raped meritorious Uppalavaṇṇa Bhikkhunī, poor Indika who offered a single spoonful of rice and was fortunate to be blessed by being reborn in heaven and the frog who received a heavenly rebirth while listening to Dhamma.

III. The second to sixth impulsions of the cognitive series affect the individual as Aparāpariya Vedanīyā Kammas, which do not bear any result in this birth, or even the next, but sometime later in the long journey of saṃsāra. Some examples are: Ven. Cakkhupāla, who became blind, the Arahant elder Moggallāna who was assaulted by thieves, the treasurer, Aputtaka who was extremely wealthy and the beauty of Arahant Bhikkhuni Uppalavaṇṇa.

IV. If kamma does not get an opportunity to give its results in this rebirth, it can become defunct and never produce any effect. So too with the effects that could have ripened in next rebirth.

That *kamma* is called *Ahosi Kamma*. For thirty-six years *Devadatta Thero* protected his *bhikkhu sīla* and the good *Upapajja Vedanīyā Kamma* portion of that merit, which was due to give him good results in the next rebirth, became null and void when he fell into hell. He will, however, still get the results of the *Aparāpariya Vedanīyā* portion of his merit in a future rebirth. He will be reborn to later become the *Paccekabuddha Sattissara* in that life. If one becomes a *Buddha*, *Paccekabuddha* or *Arahant* all one's *Upapajja Vedanīyā* and *Aparāpariya Vedanīyā kamma* will be null and void then and there! One example is the story of the *Arahant Aṅgulimala*.

Section One: The results of merit

Here, we are not going to explain the above-mentioned stanza further but we will elaborate more on the following line:

"kalyāṇaṃ vā pāpakaṃ vā tassa dāyādo bhavissāmī'ti..."

It carries the meaning that one will be the heir of:

1. The good results that arise from good deeds
2. The bad results that arise from bad deeds

Earlier, we explained what good *kamma* is and now we will mention the results of such *kamma*. First, we mentioned *tīṇi puñña kiriya*, the threefold meritorious acts. These are:

1. Offering alms
2. Observing and protecting sīla
3. Practicing meditation

So, first we will mention the effects of offering alms as mentioned in the *Sīhasenāpati Sutta* (*AN 5:34*).

Effects visible in the present life to the one who makes merit

1. One will be dear and agreeable to many people.
2. Good persons will resort to one.
3. One will acquire a good reputation.
4. Whatever assembly one approaches, one will do so confidently and composed.
5. One will not be deficient in the layperson's duties (according to the *Dānānisaṃsa Sutta—AN 5:35*).
6. One will rise up to heaven after death.

According to the *Sappurisadāna Sutta* (*AN 5:148*) there are an additional five good results. These are listed below.

The good results of offering alms

1. One will become beautiful or handsome by offering alms with faith. So, may one offer alms with faith always!
2. By offering respectfully, one's partners and children, masters and servants will be obedient and listen carefully to understand.
3. As a result of offering alms that are timely, one will receive much wealth at a younger age or when one needs it most, (e.g. at a time of famine). According to the *Kāladāna Sutta* (*AN 5:36),* "timely" means giving a gift to a visitor, to one setting out on a journey, to a patient, during a time of famine, or giving part of the new harvest to the virtuous ones.
4. By offering alms without being miserly, one will feel good and be happy to enjoy the wealth, good food and vehicles one receives as a result.
5. The wealth will be protected from fire, water, bad people and thieves in any rebirth as a result of offering that which was earned in a fair manner, without doing any harm to others or to oneself.

Some other results of offering alms that are mentioned in the *Dhamma*

1. By offering alms with one's own money but avoiding others' involvement, one will receive the benefit of wealth in the future but will not have the support of others around one.
2. By offering alms with the money of people gathered without spending a penny of one's own money, one will have the support of others but will not receive wealth.
3. People who never offer alms and never help those who offer alms will neither have wealth nor the support of others.
4. Those who offer alms with their own money as well as involving others will get both benefits of wealth and the support of others as good results.

(Dhammapada commentary)

It is mentioned in the *Apadāna* that even a small offering of alms, if done with respect, wisdom and a collected mind, will give great results.

Meritorious effects of offering flowers

Once, in a previous rebirth Ven. *Paduma* offered a single lotus to the *Saṅgha* led by *Padumuttara Buddha,* and by that merit he was fortunate enough to be reborn as a wheel-turning monarch as many times as the number of petals on the offered flower. Afterwards, he became a king seven hundred times in the human world, at the end of which he attained the supreme bliss of *Nibbāna*.

(Apadāna)

Ven. *Tiuppala Māliya Thero* did not fall into hell for ninety-one aeons as a result of the merit made from offering three water lily flowers to *Vipassī Buddha*. He became *Sakka* three hundred times and a wheel-turning monarch five hundred times, after which he attained *Nibbāna*. Thus, one can see the good rewards of doing such merit with a developed mind.

(342nd Apadāna)

Bhikkhunī Sattuppalamālikā became the queen of *Sakka* seventy-seven times as a result of the merit made from offering seven lilies to *Sikhī Buddha*, wisely and with collected mind, in a previous birth. She had the colour and fragrance of the lily in each rebirth and by this merit she also attained *Nibbāna*.

Ven. *Tikaṇikāra Pupphiya Thero* had the reward of being reborn as a wheel-turning monarch three hundred times, *Sakka* five hundred times and the following meritorious results, mentioned below, in the following rebirths as a result of offering three oleander flowers to *Sumedha Buddha*.

1. He had lots of wealth.
2. He was never reborn in low castes but always in high castes.
3. He had the vehicles that he always wished to have.

4. He associated with pretty women and servants.
5. He had lots of excellent clothes and jewellery.
6. He always earned other's respect.
7. His good name was famous throughout the country.
8. He had lots of company and people around.
9. No one was able to make his people quarrel and become divided.
10. He became the greatest among his relatives.
11. He never suffered from excessively hot or cold climates.
12. He never suffered from mental and physical pain.
13. That same wholesome act he had done previously resulted in attaining the supreme bliss of *Nibbāna.*

(501st Apadāna)

Meritorious effects of offering oil lamps

Ven. *Ajitha Thero* offered an oil lamp to *Padumuttara* Buddha and was reborn in heaven for sixty thousand aeons, a thousand times as *Sakka*, the king of the gods, seven hundred times as kings and finally attained *Nibbāna*.

(400th Apadāna)

Bhikkhunī Pañcadīpaka offered five oil lamps to the *bodhi* tree on a very dark night during the period of *Padumuttara Buddha.* This resulted in becoming the queen consort to *Sakka* eighty times, the queen consort to thousands of wheel-turning monarchs and, during our *Buddha's* time, she was blessed to attain *Nibbāna* at the young age of seven.

(9th Therī Apadāna)

Bhikkhunī Sakula offered an oil lamp one night to the stupa of *Kassapa Buddha* and gained the following meritorious results:

1. Wherever she went there was light.
2. She had the divine eye.
3. She had very sharp wisdom.
4. She was much liked and had a good reputation.
5. She was wise endowed with great respect for spiritual practice.

6. She was always reborn in high castes.
7. The ground became even wherever she set foot.
8. She was blessed with very sharp sight.

(Therī Apadāna)

Ven. *Ekadīpiya Thero* offered one oil lamp to the burning pyre of *Buddha Siddhattha* and was reborn thirty-one times as *Sakka* and twenty-eight times as a wheel-turning monarch.

(416th Therī Apadāna)

So, understand that even a single oil lamp offered with a calm and collected mind is more important than offering a thousand with a scattered and unwise frame of mind.

Meritorious effects of offering incense

Ven. *Dhūpadāyaka Thero* burned incense in *Siddhattha Buddha's* cell with a calm and wise mind. As a result, he did not fall into hell for ninety-four aeons and finally attained *Nibbāna* as well.

(26th Apadāna)

The *Arahant, Ven. Pilindavaccha Thero,* received ten benefits from offering incense. He:

1. Had a fragrant smelling body.
2. Became famous.
3. Became wealthy.
4. Developed quick wisdom.
5. Developed sharp wisdom.
6. Developed deep wisdom.
7. Developed wisdom regarding language and grammar.
8. Had deep knowledge.
9. Had wide knowledge.
10. Quickly grasped knowledge.

(Pilindavaccha Apadāna)

Meritorious effects of offering scented water

When Lord *Buddha Vipassī* passed by with his disciples, Ven. *Tusita* sprayed scented water which had been made from boiling *Vanuk* flowers. As a result, he was reborn two thousand five hundred times

as a wheel-turning monarch, two thousand five hundred times as the lord of heaven, *Sakka,* and also in every rebirth:

1. He had the same name, *Tusita.*
2. A fragrant dew surrounded him.
3. Fragrance from his body would suffuse a distance of half a mile.
4. Whatever he took into his palm would become sweet smelling.

Thus, he spent his life comfortably and fulfilled *pāramī* for a hundred thousand aeons. Finally, he attained *Nibbāna.*

(Apadāna)

Ven. *Gandhodakiya Thera* offered a pot of fragrant water, in the rain, to the *bodhi tree* which helped Lord *Padumuttara Buddha*.

As a result, he was reborn in heaven with all its comforts and in the human world he felt neither pain nor sadness. He was free from all grievances and finally attained *Nibbāna*.

(54th Apadāna)

Meritorious effects of listening to *Dhamma* discourses

During Lord *Buddha Padumuttara's* period, Ven. *Ekadhamma Savaniya* listened to only one *Dhamma* discourse and was reborn thirty-one times as *Sakka* and twenty-one times as a wheel-turning monarch.

(427th Apadāna)

Ven. *Ekadhamma Savaniya* once listened to a *Dhamma* discourse about '*Anicca Saññā'* (the perception of impermanence) with a collected mind and wisdom and gained the following benefits:

1. He was reborn in heaven for thirty-two thousand aeons.
2. He was reborn as *Sakka* fifty-one times.
3. He was reborn as a wheel-turning monarch seventy-one times.

During our Lord *Buddha's* time at the age of seven he attained *Nibbāna*.

(339th Apadāna)

So, it is very important to listen to *Dhamma* discourses with a calm and collected mind.

Meritorious effects of offering alms

During the time of Lord *Buddha Atthadassī*, Ven. *Mahāraja* offered a comb of bee honey with a calm and collected mind and wisdom. As a result, he was blessed to be reborn fourteen times as *Sakka*, five hundred times as a wheel-turning monarch, twenty-eight times as a king and finally attained *Nibbāna*.

(35th Apadāna)

During the time of Lord *Buddha Atthadassī*, Ven. *Adhimutta* offered sugarcanes to the Lord *Buddha* and his disciples and did not fall into hell for one thousand eight hundred aeons.

(36th Apadāna)

Venerable *Bhikkhunī* '*Kaṭacchu Bhikkhādāyikā*' offered a spoonful of rice to Lord *Buddha Tissa* and was blessed to be reborn thirty-six times as the queen of *Sakka* and fifty-one times as the queen consort of a wheel-turning monarch.

(7th Therī Apadāna)

During Lord *Buddha Padumuttara*'s time, the *Bhikkhunī Uppaladāyikā* offered alms food and a robe. As a result, she became the queen consort of *Sakka* a thousand times, and then the queen consort of a wheel-turning monarch a thousand times more.

She also benefited from the following meritorious results:

1. She was fair in complexion.
2. She was beautiful.
3. She was pleasant to see.
4. She was reborn in a high caste and class.
5. She had all the beauties of a woman.

(Uppaladāyikātheri, Apadāna)

It has been mentioned that long life, all the comforts, high power, wisdom and fame also can be gained in the same way.

Meritorious effects of offering needles

Ven. *Sūcidāyaka* offered needles to *Vipassī Buddha* and became a wheel-turning monarch seven times.

(7th Apadāna)

According to the Ven. *Pilindavaccha Thero Apadāna,* it is mentioned that the following meritorious effects were received:

1. He had the power to solve doubts.
2. He was handsome and beautiful.
3. He had much wealth.
4. He had a sharp and powerful wisdom to understand deep matters in *Dhamma.*

Meritorious effects of offering cloth

Ven. *Ekadussa Dāyaka* offered a cloth with a mind of respect and wisdom to *Padumuttara Buddha*. As a result, he became *Sakka* thirty-six times, a king in the human world thirty-three times and gained the below mentioned meritorious effects:

1. He was handsome and beautiful.
2. He was virtuous.
3. He could not be cheated by enemies.
4. He had lots of clothes.
5. He had much wealth.
6. He had canopies held over his head.
7. His body was golden in colour.

According to the *Pilindavaccha Apadāna* some additional results were obtained, such as:

8. His skin did not become dirty with dust.
9. He was blessed with a very bright body.
10. He had a soft and smooth body.

Meritorious effects of offering mattresses

According to the 271st *Apadāna*, Rev *Suvaṇṇa Bibbohaniya* gained many benefits from offering a mattress. According to the *Pilindavaccha Apadānaṃ* these were:

1. He had a balanced body.
2. He was respected.
3. He had a smooth body.
4. His body was attractive.
5. He was wise.
6. He received support from others.

Meritorious effects of offering flags

Ven. *Chattadāyaka Thero,* in one of his previous rebirths, had a son who became an *Arahant* and passed away. He offered his parasol to the pyre of the *Arahant thero* and for the following ninety-six aeons benefited from the results of that kamma, while also becoming a wheel-turning monarch three times.

(Chattadāyakattheraapadānaṃ — Apadāna)

Ven. *Ekachattiya Thero,* in one of his previous rebirths, held a white parasol over *Atthadassī Buddha* and gained comforts for seventy-seven aeons, became *Sakka* seventy-seven times and became a wheel-turning monarch a thousand times.

(412th Apadāna)

The meritorious results gained by Ven. *Pilindavaccha* for offering a parasol*:*

1. He never suffered from cold.
2. His skin never became dirty with dust.
3. Had no suffering at all.
4. He was always respected by others.
5. He had soft skin.
6. He had a pure mind.
7. He never suffered from heat.
8. He received beautiful parasols.

Meritorious effects of offering begging bowls

Ven. *Pattadāyaka Thero* offered a begging bowl to *Siddhattha Buddha* and for ninety-four aeons did not fall into hell.

(246th Apadāna)

The ten meritorious effects gained by Ven. *Pilindavaccha Thero* for offering begging bowls are:

1. He had expensive golden and silver pendants.
2. He had no suffering at all.
3. He was never in danger.
4. He was always respected by others.
5. He was never lacking food, drink, clothes and beds.
6. His wealth was not wasted in vain.
7. He had a strong mind.
8. He liked the *Dhamma* a lot.
9. He was a person with less defilements.
10. He became free of all cankers in the end.

Meritorious effects of offering shaving razors

1. One becomes sharp at everything.
2. One has a calm and quiet mind.
3. One has a wide breadth of knowledge.
4. One has determination.
5. One is courageous.
6. One has a well-developed mind.
7. One has a sharp mind.

Ven. *Vāsidāyaka Thera* offered a shaving razor and did not go to hell for ninety-four aeons.

(240th Apadāna)

Meritorious effects of offering big knives

1. One always has good thoughts.
2. One is courageous.
3. One has patience.
4. One has much love.

5. One is blessed with excellent wisdom.

(Pilindavaccha Apadāna)

Meritorious effects of offering nail clippers

1. One has lots of servants.
2. One has cattle and horses.
3. One has bodyguards in one's service.
4. One has barbers in one's service.
5. One has cooks in one's service.

(Pilindavaccha Apadāna)

Meritorious effects of offering hand-held fans

1. One is free from harm by heat or cold.
2. One is free from skin irritation.
3. One is without mental suffering.
4. One has good control of lust.
5. One has good control of hatred.
6. One has good control of ignorance.
7. One has good control of conceit.
8. One can curb heterodoxies.

(Pilindavaccha Apadāna)

Meritorious effects of offering water filtering cloths

1. One lives long.
2. Enemies cannot harm one.
3. No harm is inflicted upon one from weapons.
4. One is not harmed by poison.
5. One does not experience untimely deaths.

(Pilindavaccha Apadāna)

Meritorious effects of offering oil containers

1. One becomes handsome and beautiful.
2. One has sweet speech.
3. One has good thinking.
4. One has a collected mind.

5. One becomes secure in every way.

Meritorious effects of cleaning stupas

Ven. *Pabhaṅkara Thero,* in one of his previous rebirths, was a forest worker and when he was roaming in the forest, by chance, he stumbled across a ruined pagoda which contained the sacred relics of *Padumuttara Buddha*. He cleaned it well, worshiped it eight times and then left without returning back to it again. In the next birth he was reborn in *Tāvatiṃsa* heaven and had a golden palace there. He was reborn three hundred times as *Sakka*, twenty-five times as a wheel-turning monarch and received the nine meritorious rewards in the human world mentioned below. They are:

1. He always had lots of wealth.
2. Even if he was in a forest, he received everything he needed.
3. Wherever he went into the forest, the path ahead was cleared by itself.
4. He never had any kind of itching, rashes, skin irritations or scabies.
5. He did not suffer from any kind of cancer.
6. He was blessed with a golden complexion.
7. He got what he wished for and was free from what he disliked.
8. He had good concentration.
9. He did not have to suffer in any of the lower realms for a hundred thousand aeons.

The 336th *Apadāna* mentions that the merit made then helped him even to attain *Nibbāna*.

(336th Apadāna)

Meritorious effects of offering needle holders

1. One is always happy.
2. One is blessed with a sound physique.
3. One is able to maintain comfortable postures.

(Pilindavaccha Apadāna)

Meritorious effects of offering vest robes *(aṃsa)*

1. One is blessed with telepathy.
2. One is blessed with recalling previous rebirths.
3. One becomes very strong.

Meritorious effects of offering waist belts

1. One achieves strong concentration.
2. One becomes a yogi who is skillful in strong concentrations.
3. People around one are united.
4. Others tend to believe one's words.
5. One becomes very mindful.
6. One becomes fearless.

Meritorious effects of offering bowl-stands

Ven. Pattadhara offered a begging bowl-stand in one of his previous rebirths to Sikhī Buddha and was reborn as a wheel-turning monarch named Sāmanthavaṇṇa.

The devotee *Khujjuttarā,* in one of her previous rebirths, offered eight bangles to a *Paccekabuddha* so that they may be used to make a bowl-stand for his begging bowl. As a result, she later became blessed with wisdom in *Dhamma*.

(Manorathapurani, Aṅguttara Nikāya Commentary)

According to Ven. *Pilindavaccha Thero's Apadāna* there are five meritorious results from offering bowl-stands:

1. One gets an unshakeable mind.
2. One becomes very mindful.
3. One has a sound wisdom to understand the *Dhamma.*
4. One is not likely to forget the *Dhamma.*
5. One comprehends the *Dhamma* thoroughly.

Meritorious effects of offering pots and pans

Ven. *Bhājanapālaka Thero* (a.k.a. *Bhājanadāyaka Thero*) in one of his previous rebirths was reborn as a human, became a potter and

offered vessels to *bhikkhus*. As a result of that, he was reborn to become a wheel-turning monarch once, was blessed with all the physical comforts in good planes of existence in *saṃsāra* for ninety-one aeons after that and eventually attained *Nibbāna*.

(232th Apadāna)

Similarly, to the above-mentioned wholesome act, *Ven. Pilindavaccha Thero* too was fortunate to have the following three meritorious results:

1. **In every rebirth he had the opportunity to use expensive vessels.**
2. **He was fortunate to have chaste wives, faithful servants and expensive vehicles.**
3. **He had the skill to have all-round and deep knowledge in various branches of education in his later rebirths.**

Meritorious effects of offering plates

1. One will own beautiful plates.
2. One becomes charming in features, virtues and lifestyle.
3. One becomes polite in behavior.

Meritorious effects of offering medicines

Ven. *Mettagū Thero* offered ghee to *Sumedha Buddha*, became *Sakka* eighteen times, a wheel-turning monarch fifty-one times and in every rebirth, he inherited immense wealth. Finally, he attained *Nibbāna* also.

(403rd Apadāna)

Similarly, to the above-mentioned wholesome act, Ven. *Pilindavaccha Thero* was fortunate to have the following additional ten results:

1. He had long life.
2. He became very powerful.
3. He could work with good determination.
4. He was very bright in complexion.
5. He became famous.
6. He enjoyed many comforts.
7. He experienced no calamity.

8. He experienced no danger.
9. He became respectable.
10. He experienced no separation from those who were dear to him.

Meritorious effects of offering sandals

Ven. *Upāhanadāyaka Thero* offered a pair of sandals to Ven. *Chandana Thero* with collected mind and wisdom and, as a result, did not fall into hell for ninety-one aeons.

Ven. *Pānadhidāyaka Thero* offered the pair of sandals he was wearing to *Anomadassī Buddha* and became *Sakka*, the lord of gods, fifty-five times, a wheel-turning monarch a thousand times and gained the following three additional benefits:

1. He received fast vehicles.
2. He received tuskers, horses and golden palaces.
3. He received expensive sandals.

(479th Apadāna)

Meritorious effects of offering towels

1. The donor will have a golden complexion.
2. The donor's body does not get dirty.
3. The donor's skin becomes radiant.
4. The donor becomes glorious.
5. The donor's skin becomes smooth.
6. The donor's skin does not become dusty.

Meritorious effect of offering walking sticks

Ven. *Daṇḍadāyaka Thero* made a walking stick from a bamboo tree, offered it to the *Saṅgha* and, as a result, did not go to hell for ninety-four aeons, being reborn only in the human and heavenly worlds.

According to Ven. *Pilindavaccha Thero*, six additional benefits can arise from the same *kamma*:

1. One will have a lot of sons.

2. One will not fear anything.
3. Others will not be able to find a chance to harm one.
4. One will be protected in every way.
5. One will be free from a sense of guilt over unnecessary issues.
6. One will have a trouble-free mind.

Meritorious effects of offering medicinal eye-salve

1. One will have finely set, big, round eyes.
2. One will have eyes being white, yellow and red as necessary.
3. One will have a good eye-sight, free from diseases.
4. One will be free from all kinds of diseases.
5. One will be blessed with psychic powers.
6. Ultimately, one will be fortunate to attain the supreme bliss of *Nibbāna.*

(Pilindavaccha Apadāna)

Meritorious effects of offering keys and key cases

1. Out of the merit made from offering keys, one will be fortunate to have the wisdom to open the Dhamma door.
2. One will have less anger.
3. One will not get tired.

(Pilindavaccha Apadāna)

Meritorious effects of offering monks' waist belts

1. One will have strong concentration.
2. One will have a good mastery of one's concentration.
3. One's supporters will never part from one.
4. One's words will always be believed by others.
5. One will inherit a lot of wealth.

(Pilindavaccha Apadāna)

Merit of sweeping and cleaning *bodhi* tree terraces and compounds

Ven. *Sakiṃsammajjaka Thero* received the following seventeen meritorious effects from sweeping and cleaning the compound of the *bodhi tree* that shaded *Vipassī Buddha*. By sweeping and cleaning *bodhi tree* terraces and compounds with a mind of respect and faith one may receive the following benefits:

1. One will develop strong concentration.
2. One will become a faultless person.
3. One will become an immaculate person not bent on doing wrong.
4. One will not suffer in any way.
5. One will not have grievances.
6. One will not get rashes on the skin.
7. One will not get blisters or boils on the body.
8. One will not get scabies on the skin.
9. One will not get apoplexy.
10. One will not get the strong skin disease, *vitacchika*.
11. One will not get skin irritation of any kind.
12. One will not get strong rashes which cause the skin to itch and fester.
13. One will not have wails of grief.
14. One will become fearless.
15. One will become straight-minded and free from crookedness.
16. One will develop a clear mind.
17. One will be able to enter *jhānas* as one likes.

(421st Apadāna)

Ven. *Bodhisammajjaka Thero* in one of his previous rebirths, having seen that a lot of leaves had fallen under a *bodhi tree*, cleaned it well. That merit gave him the following twenty meritorious benefits mentioned below. Therefore, seeing both of these cases, the one mentioned above and the one below, it makes one thing clear: if one sweeps and cleans *bodhi tree* terraces and compounds with respect,

faith and wisdom, one can gain these combined thirty-seven wholesome benefits as a result.

18. One will not fall into hell but will instead be reborn both in the human and heavenly worlds with all comforts.
19. One will be reborn in high castes and classes.
20. One will be handsome and attractive.
21. One will be well-built.
22. One will have a fully developed body.
23. One will have a beautiful body.
24. One will have a golden complexion.
25. One will have a smooth and soft skin.
26. One will be reborn with a silver spoon in the mouth.
27. One will not get dirt on the skin.
28. One will not suffer from rain and wind.
29. One's body will not be soaked with sweat.
30. One will be free from physical and mental suffering.
31. One will be free from enemies.
32. One will have a lot of wealth.
33. One will experience no harm from kings, fire, water or thieves.
34. One will get loyal and respectful servants.
35. One will not have untimely deaths.
36. Everyone else around one will want one to have all comforts.
37. One will be famous and glorious.

Finally, this merit may help one to attain the supreme bliss of *Nibbāna* as well.

(528th Apadāna)

Meritorious effects offering smoking pipes for sick *bhikkhus*

It is no wrong or bad deed to offer smoking pipes to *bhikkhus* who may suffer from diseases of the nasal cavity.

1. One will have a strong mindfulness.
2. One will have a good nervous system.

3. One will be fortunate to have psychic powers.

(Pilindavaccha Apadāna)

Meritorious effects of offering cauldrons and caskets

1. One will always have security.
2. One will have a comfortable life.
3. One will be glorious with many loyal supportive people around.
4. One will have a soft and smooth skin.
5. One will be free from all kinds of disasters.
6. One will become a very upright person.
7. One will receive big cauldrons and attractive caskets.
8. One will receive diverse modes of transport.
9. One will be free from fear.
10. One will have a lot of wealth that is not likely to be destroyed by others.

(Pilindavaccha Apadāna)

Meritorious effects of offering eye-salve holders

1. One will be blessed with a life full of all sorts of beauty and success.
2. One will have a long life.
3. One will be a wise person.
4. One will be free from all the dangers of life.

Meritorious effects of offering pen-knives and tweezers

Because of offering pen-knives and tweezers the donor will get the strong and pure wisdom to uproot and destroy all the defilements from his mind, according to the *Pilindavaccha Apadāna*.

Meritorious effects of offering inhalers

According to the *Pilindavaccha Apadāna,* the donor of inhalers may get these eight meritorious results in return:

1. One will develop faith in the Triple Gem.
2. One will be virtuous.

3. One will be ashamed to commit bad deeds.
4. One will be afraid to commit bad deeds.
5. One will be a sophisticated person.
6. One will be generous.
7. One will be patient.
8. One will be wise.

Meritorious effects of offering chairs

Ven. *Hemaka Thero* created a golden chair by his psychic power, offered it to *Piyadassi Buddha* and, out of that merit, became a wheel-turning monarch seventy-five times and thereafter *Sakka* thirty-two times.

Ven. *Ekāsanadāyaka Thero* prepared a place to sit on his wooden bed, offered it to *Padumuttara Buddha* and, due to that merit, became a wheel-turning monarch eighty times and then *Sakka* fifty times.

(423rd Apadāna)

Ven. *Ekāsanadāyikā Bhikkhunī* once offered a seat with faith, wisdom and a collected mind for a certain *bhikkhu* to sit on. Due to that merit she had the fortune to be the queen consort of *Sakka* eighty times and then the queen consort of a wheel-turning monarch seventy-seven times. In addition to that, she was reborn in the human world endowed the following fortunate characteristics mentioned below. Anyone who makes similar merit may receive these rewards as well:

1. One will get golden and silver chairs.
2. One will not have mental suffering.
3. One will get many mattresses and carpets.
4. One will have much wealth.
5. One will be reborn in high castes and classes.
6. One will not have sorrow or wails of grief.
7. One will be reborn attractive to others.
8. One will have many loyal people around who help in each and every activity such as bathing, adorning, feeding and providing entertainment for one, etc.

Finally, the same merit will also help the donor to attain the supreme bliss of *Nibbāna*.

(Ekāsanadāyikā Therī Apadāna)

In addition to that, these added rewards have been mentioned in the *Pilindavaccha Apadāna*.

9. One will earn others' respect.
10. One will earn others' praise.
11. One will be ready to give what one has.
12. For a long time, one will not have to suffer in saṃsāra.

Meritorious effects of offering pillows

1. One will have expensive and comfortable pillows.
2. One will get the determination and energy to follow the noble eight-fold path.
3. One will have good restraint of the five senses.
4. One will have good concentration.
5. One will be well-bred and well-mannered.
6. One will have energy to develop the Enlightenment Factors and the Three Restraints.[1]

(Pilindavaccha Apadāna)

Meritorious effects of offering straw-thatched huts

The *Pilindavaccha Apadāna* advises that the donor of these receives numerous seats in return.

Meritorious effects of offering foot-rests

1. One will have many vehicles and carriages.
2. One will have wives, servants and workers who will obey one and attend to one loyally and respectfully.

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[1] The three restraints are *kaya vacī mano saṃvarasīla* — restraint by body, speech and mind

Meritorious effects of making tree-trunk foot bridges

The *Apadāna* has it that Ven. *Dhotaka Thero* once built a bridge, offered it to *Padumuttara Buddha* and the *Saṅgha,* and received these seven meritorious benefits in return:

1. Even though he may have been about to fall from a tree or rock, he found a firm and secure footing without fail.
2. He could not be defeated by his enemies.
3. Thieves could not rob his wealth.
4. He could not be disgraced by others.
5. He had the energy to win over his enemies.
6. He did not suffer in scorching weather.
7. He had whatever mode of travel he wished, both in the human and heavenly worlds.

At the end of his journey in *saṃsāra* he will attain the supreme bliss of *Nibbāna*.

Five meritorious effects of offering body oils

1. One will be healthy.
2. One will be pleasant and handsome.
3. One will have a quick understanding of the *Dhamma.*
4. One will get plenty of food and refreshments throughout one's lives.
5. One will enjoy long lifespan.

(Pilindavaccha Apadāna)

Meritorious effects of offering ghee and drinking oils

Once, Ven. *Sappidāyaka Thero* offered some ghee to *Phussa Buddha* and was reborn as a wheel-turning monarch as a result.

(166th Apadāna)

According to Ven. *Pilindavaccha Thero*, the donors of ghee and drinking oils may receive the following five meritorious benefits:

1. One will become a powerful person.
2. One will be reborn handsome.
3. One will have obedient and pleasant children.

4. One will be free from all illnesses.
5. One will be fortunate to lead a pure life.

Meritorious effects of offering mouth cleaning materials

1. One will have a clear throat.
2. One will have melodious voice.
3. One will not get tuberculosis.
4. One will not get diseases like asthma or other respiratory diseases.
5. One will have a pleasant-smelling mouth free from bad breath.

(Pilindavaccha Apadāna)

Meritorious effects of offering curd, honey, jaggary and dessert

1. By offering curd, one will have powerful energy to do the thirty-two parts of the body meditation.
2. By offering honey, one will gain the ultimate bliss of Nibbāna.
3. By offering various refreshments, one will have the power to attain the *cattāri sāmañña phalāni* (the fourfold fruit of the spiritual life) namely, the fruits of the four stages of awakening.
4. By offering jaggary, one will have the power to cultivate the wisdom that cuts off all defilements.

The meritorious effects of offering everything

1. The fourfold army, namely: elephants, horses, war-chariots and infantry, will frequently give one protection.
2. In almost every life, one will have sixty thousand completely decorated chariots.
3. Sixty thousand musical instruments together with decorated drums will be there for one's entertainment.

4. Sixty-six thousand arrestingly dressed, smiling virgins endowed with feminine beauty will always flock around one.
5. One will be reborn in heaven for thirty thousand aeons.
6. One will be reborn as *Sakka* a thousand times.
7. One will also be reborn as a wheel-turning monarch for a thousand times.

It should be taken into proper consideration that the donor can receive all of these benefits only by offering with a collected mind imbued with respect and wisdom.

Meritorious effects of applying sandalwood cream on feet

Ven. *Todeyya Thero* once applied sandalwood cream on *Sumedha Buddha*'s feet and gained these meritorious benefits:

1. His words were believed by others.
2. He became great.
3. He became straight-minded.
4. His body radiated for twenty-five aeons.
5. He was reborn in heaven for two thousand six hundred aeons.
6. He was reborn to become a wheel-turning monarch a thousand times.
7. He was reborn to become a king many a time.

After receiving all these benefits in his *saṃsāric* journey, the remaining part of the same merit helped him attain the supreme bliss of *Nibbāna* in our *Gotama Buddha's sāsana* as well.

(408th Apadāna)

Meritorious effects of offering stamens and flower canopies

Ven. *Reṇupūjaka Thero* offered stamens from the flowers of the ironwood tree to *Vipassī Buddha* and attained *Nibbāna* after being reborn to become a wheel-turning monarch called *Reṇu*.

(110th Apadāna)

Ven. *Tiṇasūlaka Thero* offered *tiṇasūla* flowers to *Tissa Buddha*. Due to the merit made he was reborn as *Sakka* twenty-five times, to become a wheel-turning monarch seventy-five times and in the end attained the supreme bliss of *Nibbāna*.

(413th Apadāna)

Ven. *Atichattiya Thero* once offered a canopy of flowers to the sacred stupa of *Atthadassī Buddha* and did not fall into hell for one thousand seven hundred aeons and became *Sakka* for the same amount of time.

(141st Apadāna)

Meritorious effects of offering *kuṭis* for the *Saṅgha*

Ven. *Naḷakuṭidāyaka Thero* offered a *kuṭi* made of reeds once to *Nārada Buddha* and was reborn to become a wheel-turning monarch thirty-four times. Finally, he attained the supreme bliss of *Nibbāna*.

(499th Apadāna)

Ven. *Naḷāgārika Thero* too made a *kuṭi* out of reeds and thatched with dried grass and offered it to *Nārada Buddha*. Out of this merit he was reborn in heaven for fourteen aeons and became a wheel-turning monarch seventy-four times. Finally, he attained *Arahantship* with the four analytical knowledges (*Catupaṭi-sambhidā*).

(345th Apadāna)

Ven. *Tiṇakuṭidāyaka Thero* was once born to a poor servant ninety-one aeons ago. One day he went to the forest for some reason. There he made a *kuṭi* with six poles, covered it with grass and offered it to the *Saṅgha*. With that merit he received the following rewards:

1. An abode appeared for him in *Tāvatiṃsa* heaven.
2. Wherever he was born, palaces appeared (or were built) for him according to his wish.
3. He became free from all fears, frights and panics.
4. Fearsome wild animals, such as lions and bears, avoided his path whenever he went past their areas.

5. In the same way, venomous snakes, *yakkhas*, hungry ghosts and other invisible, fierce souls left his path whenever he walked past their habitats and haunted places.

6. Finally, he attained the supreme bliss of *Nibbāna* in our *Gotama Buddha's Sāsana.*

(337th Apadāna)

The *Buddha* also mentioned in the "*Kiṃdada Sutta*" (SN 1:42 "Giving What?") that if someone offers a residence (*upassayaṃ*) to the *Saṅgha* then they offer everything.

Meritorious effects of offering *Dhamma*

The *Buddha*, who is the jewel precious beyond words, most precious in all the worlds and in all times, once said "*Sabbadānaṃ Dhammadānaṃ jināti*"[2] which translates as "the gift of *Dhamma* excels all gifts."

The meaning of which is that the wholesomeness of teaching and giving *Dhamma* is beyond all other wholesome offerings.

In the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*, the *Dhammapada* Commentary, it elucidates the meaning of the above line as follows:

Tattha 'Sabbadānaṃ Dhammadānan'ti

Sacepi hi cakkavāḷagabbhe yāva brahmalokā nirantaraṃ katvā sannisinnānaṃ Buddha Paccekabuddha khīṇāsavānaṃ kadaligabbha-sadisāni cīvarāni dadeyya, tasmiṃ samāgame catuppadikāya gāthāya katānumodanāva seṭṭhā.

The meaning of the above *Pāḷi* verse is: delivering a *Dhamma* talk, consisting of at least a four-lined *Pāḷi* stanza, is much greater than giving a gift of soft robes, even if they are as soft as the innermost tender tissues of the trunk of a banana tree, and even if one is giving the robes to such a great number of *Sammā Sambuddhas*, *Paccekabuddhas* and great *Arahants* that if they were sitting together, without even a little space between them, they would fill

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[2] Dhp 354

the center of this world system, even up to the highest *Brahma* realm of "Neither Perception nor non-Perception."

Not only that, but the commentary continues further:

Tañhi dānaṃ tassā gāthāya soḷasiṃ kalaṃ nāgghati.

Which means that the merit generated from offering alms to such a number of *Sammā Sambuddhas*, *Paccekabuddhas* and great *Arahants* is worth less than a sixteenth of the merit generated from delivering a *Dhamma* talk which consists of at least a four-line *Pāḷi* stanza. In such a way, it emphasizes that delivering and listening even to the briefest *Dhamma* talk is of great fruit. To illustrate this point further, another quotation from the commentary to the *Dhammapada* is given here:

Tathārūpāya eva parisāya paṇītapiṇḍapātassa patte pūretvā dinnadānatopi sappitelādīnaṃ patte pūretvā dinnabhesajjadānatopi Mahāvihāra sadisānaṃ vihārānañca Lohapāsāda sadisānañca pāsādānaṃ anekāni satasahassāni kāretvā dinna senāsana dānatopi Anāthapiṇḍikādīhi vihāre ārabbha kata pariccāgatopi antamaso catuppadikāya gāthāya anumodanāvasenāpi pavattitaṃ dhammadānameva varaṃ seṭṭhaṃ.

In the same way as mentioned above, even if there is going to be a deliciously and extravagantly prepared almsgiving to *Sammā Sambuddhas*, *Paccekabuddhas* and great *Arahants,* it is inferior to the greatness of giving a good *Dhamma* talk. To draw another illustration to explain this further, even if there is going to be an expensively prepared offering of medicine, such as bowlfuls of ghee and so on, to the same amount of *Sammā Sambuddhas*, *Paccekabuddhas* and great *Arahants* seated in the same way, that offering too is not higher than the gift of a good *Dhamma* talk. Even erecting and offering buildings (*Senāsana Pūja)* with hundreds and thousands of large monasteries (*vihāras)* equal in size to the *Mahāvihāra* or other multi-storeyed *vihāras* in the ancient *Anuradhapura* kingdom, such as *Lohamahāpāsāda*, is less in greatness when compared to a good *Dhamma* talk which is delivered with the taste of the supreme bliss of *Nibbāna*.

In the *Dhamma* it is mentioned that even the thought of such a *Dhamma* talk is again higher and greater than that of the famous donation, costing fifty-four crores (i.e. 540 million) of gold pieces, of the *Jetavana Mahāvihāra* by the treasurer *Anāthapiṇḍika,* who was the main patron of *Gotama Buddha*.

The reason behind the disparity is that such alms are given because the donors have listened to and understood the true *Dhamma.* If they did not understand the true *Dhamma* they would never have even offered a pinch of rice or gruel. From this point too, it should be understood that giving the gift of *Dhamma* excels all other gifts.

Ven. *Arahant Sāriputta Thero,* who was the foremost in wisdom of all the *Arahants* in this *sāsana,* was so perceptive that he could even count the number of water drops that fell if it rained continuously for a whole aeon. Even such a highly developed *Arahant* may not have realized *Dhamma* on his own if he could not have listened to a word of true *Dhamma*. Therefore, the Blessed One told the god *Sakka* that giving the gift of *Dhamma* excels all other gifts.

So, you true, good people who may read this, do kindly become more and more involved in the propagation of the *Dhamma*. May you be involved in giving talks and producing publications of *Dhamma*.

The value of the three refuges

Ven. *Saraṇagamaniya Thero* observed the three refuges from Ven. *Nisabha Thero* in the period of *Anomadassī Buddha*. By the power of the merit, made with good understanding and combined with great faith, he was fortunate to be reborn as the god *Sakka* eighty times and to become a wheel-turning monarch seventy-five times. Finally, he became an *Arahant* at the age of seven in our *Gotama Buddha's* period.

(23rd Apadāna)

Ven. *Pañcasīlasamādāniya Thero* observed the five precepts from Ven. *Nisabha Thero* in the same *Buddha's* period. As a result of that merit, he was fortunate to become the god *Sakka* thirty times, a

wheel-turning monarch another seventy-five times, and ultimately an *Arahant* while observing the five precepts in the city of *Vesāli* in our *Buddha's* period.

(24th Apadāna)

If someone lives with a pure and faithful mind making the Triple Gem his or her one and only refuge, that person will never fall into hell but will reborn in celestial worlds instead.

Ye keci Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gatāse,
na te gamissanti apāyabhūmiṃ;
pahāya mānusaṃ dehaṃ,
devakāyaṃ paripūressantī' ti. [3]

If someone offers alms to an animal, he or she will receive longevity, good complexion, comforts, strength and wisdom for a hundred aeons. If the alms are given to a human with bad *sīla,* then the donor will receive the same result, but for a thousand aeons. If it were offered to a charitable or meritorious person, the same results could be gained for a hundred thousand aeons. If the same alms were given to a saint or a meritorious monk, the mentioned results could be gained for a hundred billion aeons.

In the commentary to the Middle-Length Discourses it is stated that the result of giving alms to a person who takes refuge in the triple gem is immeasurable. If a person gives alms to a virtuous person, one who observes the five precepts, the results are even greater. If one gives to a follower of the ten-precepts the results are greater still. If one gives to a novice monk it is, again, higher — to a *bhikkhu*, even greater. If it is to a *bhikkhu* who practices insight meditation it becomes greater still, and if that alms-giving is given to a stream-enterer, it becomes greater than any other benefit mentioned previously. The commentary to the *Dakkhiṇā Vibhaṅga Sutta*[4] says that the alms given to a *bhikkhu* who has just started his insight

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[3] DN 20 *Mahāsamaya Sutta* "The Mighty Gathering" and SN 1:37 *Samaya Sutta* "Concourse"
[4] MN 142 *Dakkhiṇā Vibhaṅga Sutta* - "The Exposition of Offerings"

meditation is of lesser merit than the same alms given to a *bhikkhu* whose level of insight meditation is mature.

According to the *Velāma Sutta*[5]*,* it is more meritorious to give alms to a once-returner than to give to a hundred stream-enterers. Alms given to one non-returner is more meritorious than that given to a hundred once-returners. Alms given to one Arahant is more meritorious than that given to a hundred non-returners. Alms given to one *Paccekabuddha* is more meritorious than that given to a hundred *Arahants*. The alms-giving to one *Sammā Sambuddha* is more meritorious than that given to one hundred *Paccekabuddhas*. That donated to the whole *Saṅgha* led by the *Sammā Sambuddha* is more meritorious than all previously mentioned.

If someone builds and offers quarters to all the *Saṅgha (*i.e. the *Saṅgha* of the present and future, and in the four directions) it becomes more meritorious than all those mentioned above. But if someone goes to the triple gem for refuge, it is more meritorious than even that. Also, if one goes to the triple gem for refuge and observes the five precepts, it is more meritorious then all the above. But if someone manages to radiate lovingkindness just for a short period of time, like the time necessary to smell a flower, it is much more meritorious.

Notwithstanding all the points mentioned above, if someone practices Insight meditation on 'the perception of impermanence' for the shortest time period, like a snap of the fingers, the *Velāma Sutta* has it that that is the most meritorious act that one is able to do!

Answers to the questions of *Subha* the young man

Once, *Subha*, a young man, asked the *Tathāgatā* fourteen questions. As the *Buddha* answered, he revealed another fourteen effects of *kamma*:

1. One may die at a young age due to killing others.

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[5] AN 9:20 Velāma Sutta

2. One may be blessed with longevity due to abstinence from killing others.
3. One may suffer from ailments and diseases due to injuring and hurting others, including animals.
4. One will have healthy lives if one avoids injuring and hurting others.
5. Those who hate and harbor it may be reborn as ugly people.
6. Those who do not hate will be reborn as beautiful people.
7. Those who envy others may have little influence in future lives.
8. Those who do not envy others will have influential lives.
9. Those who do not give alms will have poor lives.
10. Those who give alms will have wealthy lives.
11. Those who are conceited may have lives in lower castes.
12. Those who are humble may be reborn in high castes.
13. Those who do not ask or investigate about the wholesome and unwholesome may be reborn as fools.
14. Those who do ask and investigate about the wholesome and unwholesome may be reborn wise.

(MN 135 — Cūḷa Kamma Vibhaṅga Sutta)

Meritorious effects of observing and protecting the five precepts

There are lots of good results for people who observe *sīla*. There are twenty-three meritorious effects for those who avoid killing. Those who avoid stealing receive eleven meritorious benefits. There are nineteen moral effects for those who avoid adultery. There are fourteen results for those who avoid lying. There are thirty moral effects for those who avoid taking intoxicants. Altogether, in this manner those who observe and protect the five precepts can receive ninety-seven meritorious effects.

As this book would become excessively long if the meritorious effects of meditation were included, I am not going to put those particulars here. If one can get so many good results by practicing alms-giving alone, just imagine how powerful the meritorious effects would be from meditation. Actually, meditation is considered the

highest wholesome action a virtuous person can do in this dispensation of the *Buddha*! So, reflecting thus over and over again, may you gain noble effort and wisdom to engage in and practice more and more wholesome actions!

Dear meritorious readers, my sole intention for providing such a long description about the power of merit was to depict the significance and nobleness of wholesome actions done with a calm and collected mind.

Therefore, may the meritorious readers who would read this *Dhamma* book engage in all meritorious actions with a pure, calm and collected mind!

Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

Section Two: The results of demerit

Now we are going to describe the bad results of demerit, or deeds done with an atrocious and polluted mind. There are four lower realms: The animal realm, the *peta* realm (the realm of ghosts), the *asuras'* realm, and the *niraya* (hell) realm. Of these, the *niraya* realm is the worst place of all. It is a place where there is never even a sigh of relief for the shortest period of time, like a finger snap! The *niraya* realm consists of one hundred and thirty-six sub-hells with no sign of comfort in any of them!

First, the tremendous suffering in the *niraya* hells in a nutshell

Let me begin to describe the suffering there with an introductory summary of the suffering in all the eight major hells.

The hell-beings there are burned with fire. Their bodies are trimmed and whittled away with axes and adzes. They are forced to lie flat on the burning iron floor and then burning red-hot iron spikes are driven through their bodies. They are forced to swallow red-hot metal balls. Their bodies are smashed by huge rolling rocks. Their flesh is pecked at by iron-beaked crows and vultures. Demon-like hell wardens beat them with big clubs. The victims are harnessed to carts and forced to haul heavy loads like bullocks. There are areas where there is grass with leaves as sharp as razor blades and trees with leaves as sharp as swords. The hell wardens force the beings to run all over that area until their bodies are cut into pieces by the grass and trees. When their bodies become just a heap of flesh and there is nothing left to be cut, the hell wardens plunge them into rivers of brine. Not only that, but the victims are also plunged into pits of rotting faeces inhabited by enormous worms with stingers the size of palm trees that sting deep into the bodies of the beings there.

Like this, the suffering of the hells is unimaginable and unspeakable.

The Niraya Hell “Sañjīva”

The hell-beings here are forced to lie flat on the burning and glowing iron-floor and then their bodies are cut into pieces. Yet, they do not die so long as that bad *kamma* has not exhausted its result. Because of this, it is called “*Sañjīva.*”

People who fight each other in intense anger, such as kings and their officials who bully and hurt the poor and the weak, or those who are killers are reborn here and suffer in this way.

The Niraya Hell “Kāḷasutta”

The beings here are forced to lie flat on the burning and glowing hell floor and then are cut and pared with axes. Due to that reason it is called “*Kāḷasutta*.” People who commit crimes against parents, friends and monks fall into this place and suffer accordingly.

The Niraya Hell “Saṅghāta”

Beings who are reborn here get stuck waist deep in the nine leagues thick iron floor. Then, from various directions, huge rocks come tumbling down, roll over them and smash their bodies.

Killers and abusers who harass and hurt animals like cows, horses and tuskers while making them work hard will fall into this place and suffer in such way.

The Niraya Hell “Roruva”

In this hell there is an evil and poisonous smoke which enters the bodies of the hell-beings and burns their innards. Because this hell is always full of yells, cries and groans from the victims who suffer from the pain of their bodies burning from inside out, this hell is called “*Roruva*.”

The Niraya Hell “Mahā Roruva”

This hell is called “*Mahā Roruva*” for two reasons. The first one is because there are yells, groans and cries of the victims who suffer

there continuously from glowing fire and evil smoke. The second one is because it is full of blood flowing from their bodies.

Thieves who steal the *Saṅgha's* property and the wealth of their parents are doomed to fall into this destination.

The Niraya Hell "Tāpana"

The wardens of hell torture the beings in this place with the fivefold transfixing. The beings are then burned in the excruciating heat and fire.

Perpetrators who burn animals alive and those who burn others' houses will be doomed to fall into this suffering and agony.

The Niraya Hell "Mahā Tāpana"

Just as in the hell "*Tāpana*," here, beings are tortured for a very, very long period of time.

Those who commit crimes believing that there would not be any life after death are doomed to fall into this state.

The Niraya Hell "Avīci"

This is the greatest hell of all, and, according to the scriptures, the lowest below the human world. The tortures in this hell are extremely severe and the beings who fall into this place have to live and suffer there the longest.

This hell has four corners and is built with four doors, one set on each side. It is walled up with iron all around and is shut in with an iron roof. It's floor as well is made of iron, like the other great hells. It is heated until it glows with a fire that covers it all-pervasively. There are flames which emanate from one wall and spread across the enclosed space until they reach the opposite side. Another fire emanates from the ground and ascends to the top. Those who fall into this place get burned by these fires. The beings are all packed in with no space in between. Not a millisecond is spent without great cries, groans and yells of the beings who suffer from painful, racking,

and piercing torments here. For all these reasons this hell is called "*Avīci*."

Perpetrators who commit the five weighty *kammas* (matricide, patricide, killing an *Arahant*, causing a *Sammā Sambuddha* to bleed or creating a schism in the *Saṅgha*) are doomed to fall into this hell without fail. Not only that, but those who kill *Bodhisattas* (*Buddha* aspirants) and other virtuous people, destroyers of *bodhi* trees and stupas, thieves who steal and destroy *Saṅgha* property, betrayers of faithful and true friends, criminals who commit crimes against their wives, liquor-addicts and people with wrong views are destined to fall into this hell and suffer for a long, long time.

Some other causes that can lead one to be reborn in hell are mentioned in the *Nimi Jātaka* and related below.

The *niraya* hells as seen by King *Nimi* and the bad deeds that cause rebirth there

It was while staying in *Makhādeva's* mango grove near *Mithilā* that the *Buddha* told this story about a smile[6].

Our *bodhisatta* was once conceived in the womb of the king's consort in *Mithilā*. On his naming-day he was given the name '*Nimi*' because soothsayers, looking at his marks, said to the king, "Your Majesty, this prince has been born to complete your family tradition. He will be the last in this great family of ascetics." Hearing this, the king proclaimed, "Since this prince has been reborn to round off my family like the hoop of a chariot-wheel, let him be named *Nimi*!"

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[6] Only part of the story is mentioned here, from the *Jātakapāḷi* and its commentary. People who wish to read the whole story in English translation in order to understand it completely are directed towards two *Jātaka* tales: The 9th *Jātaka*, '*Makhādeva Jātaka'* and the 541st *Jātaka*, '*Nimi Jātaka.'* They may be found in volumes I and VI, respectively, of 'The *Jātaka* or stories of the *Buddha's* former births,' edited by E. B. Cowell'

Throughout his life, Prince *Nimi* was dedicated to generosity and virtue, particularly by observing *sīla* on every *uposatha* day. When the king, his father, was shown a grey hair from his head, he, like generations of kings before him, presented a village to his royal barber, gave the kingdom to his son *Nimi* and became an ascetic in the mango grove. He then practiced meditation, cultivated the *jhānas*, and was reborn in the *Brahma* heavens after death.

King *Nimi*, in his dedication to almsgiving, built five alms halls, one at each gate and another in the middle of the city. From these alms halls, he not only distributed alms but many other great gifts as well. He urged and advised his subjects to be mindful and virtuous while instilling in them a fear of death and the sense of urgency that comes from that. By both example and exhortation, he encouraged his subjects to practice almsgiving and good deeds, thereby showing them the way to heaven. Throughout the kingdom people praised King *Nimi* and gave him credit for their virtue. Everyone followed his wise teaching and when they eventually died so many were reborn in the heavens that the hells became virtually empty.

In the *Tāvatiṃsa*, the *devas*, who had been citizens of king *Nimi's* kingdom, often assembled in the great hall to pay tribute to their teacher and to praise his virtues. "Hail to King *Nimi*!" they cried. "It is by following his example and by heeding his wise teaching that we have reached this divine enjoyment."

Because of the wonderful qualities of King *Nimi*, the *devas* of the *Tāvatiṃsa* wanted him to come to their heaven so that they could see him and pay their deep respect. So, they all went to *Sakka*, the lord of gods, and begged him to bring him to their divine world. Graciously agreeing to their request, *Sakka* sent *Mātali* with the divine chariot, *Vejayanta Ratha,* to King *Nimi*.

It was a full-moon day. King *Nimi* had observed the *uposatha* when the charioteer *Mātali* came by the divine chariot, brought it to rest just outside the windowsill and invited the king to enter. So, the king, after addressing and advising all the members of his household and the citizens assembled there in the courtyard below, stepped into the chariot.

As they drove away, *Mātali* asked which route to the *Tāvatiṃsa* the king preferred, by way of the heavens or by way of the hells.

"I have never seen either of these places before." The king replied. "I would like to see both!"

"It's not possible to see both at once. Which do you want to see first?" *Mātali* asked again.

King *Nimi* was sure that he was destined for heaven so he asked *Mātali* to take him to hell, so that he might have a chance to see the abode of the evil-doers.

Mātali urged the horses on, and in an instant, they arrived at a great flaming river from which arose the stench of corrosive brine. King *Nimi* watched with terror as naked beings were repeatedly cast into the burning water. He asked *Mātali* what wicked deeds these creatures had committed.

Then Mātali answered this way.

> ***''Ye dubbale balavantā jīvaloke,***
> ***hiṃ santi rosenti supāpadhammā;***
> ***Te luddakammā pasavetva pāpaṃ,***
> ***teme janā vetaraṇiṃ patantī'ti."***

(455th verse in Jātakapāḷi-2)

"Sire, this hell of *Vetaraṇī* River is reserved for those who are strong but use their strength to bully and harm the weak and to oppress the vulnerable when in the human world."

Then, *Mātali* caused the *Vetaraṇī* River to disappear and drove to another hell where King *Nimi* saw hell-beings with bodies three leagues in size. There, fierce, huge and red speckled dogs, the size of elephants, chased the victims, bit at their calf muscles, causing them to fall onto the burning hell floor, and then tore and ate their flesh to the bone. Then cart-sized vultures, with sharp beaks like iron, would gnaw upon the bone-marrow of the remaining bones. Also, sometimes a huge flock of wicked crows came and pecked, tore and ate the flesh.

"What have these creatures done to deserve such torture?" asked the king.

"Ye kecime maccharino kadariyā,
paribhāsakā samaṇabrāhmaṇānaṃ;
Hiṃ santi rosenti supāpadhammā,
te luddakammā pasavetva pāpaṃ;
Teme jane kākolasaṅghā adantī'ti."

(458th verse in Jātakapāḷi-2)

"Misers who do not give anything to others, nor let others give, *brahmins* and ascetics who cheat others by word or deed and those who accuse and shout at pious and virtuous *bhikkhus* [are reborn here]," answered *Mātali*.

As they drove through the various levels of hell, King *Nimi* saw innumerable beings suffering excruciating torture. In each place, he asked *Mātali* what those beings had done, and *Mātali* explained how evil had ripened and bore fruit.

In another hell, beings are beaten down with palm-tree sized burning iron rods and then their bodies are beaten asunder by wicked-faced hell torturers. The king was frightened by seeing this, asked his usual question and *Mātali* answered as follows:

"Ye jīvalokasmi supāpadhammino,
narañca nāriñca apāpadhammaṃ;
Hiṃ santi rosenti supāpadhammā,
te luddakammā pasavetva pāpaṃ;
Teme janā khandhahatā sayantī'ti."

(461st verse in Jātakapāḷi-2)

According to the above verse, those of bad conduct who, with hate, accuse, insult, and sully the reputation of a virtuous man or woman will fall into this place.

They drove to another hell where they saw beings with charred bodies, who were being attacked with blazing weapons and coerced into a pit of fiery and blazing coals, just like cattle being herded into a cattle-pen.

The victims fallen there get stuck waist-high in the pit of burning coals. The hell-torturers then carry basketfuls of burning coals and scatter them on the heads of the victims who scream and yell out in excruciating pain. Some victims bury their hands in the blazing coals, take handfuls and scatter them over their heads, clamouring dementedly. Terror-stricken, King *Nimi* asked the reason to fall into this hell, *Mātali* answered thus:

> ***''Ye keci pūgāya dhanassa hetu,***
> ***sakkhiṃ karitvā iṇaṃ jāpayanti;***
> ***Te jāpayitvā janataṃ janinda,***
> ***te luddakammā pasavetva pāpaṃ;***
> ***Teme janā aṅgārakāsuṃ phuṇantī'ti."***

(464th verse in Jātakapāḷi-2)

"[These are] people who collected money from the public promising to give an almsgiving, to hold a religious ceremony or to build quarters for the *Saṅgha* yet cheat them. Having collected a large amount, they bribe the head of their group and make him tell lies to the donors and cheat them out of that money. Such fraudulent money-collectors and people who refuse to pay off their debts to others fall into this hell," explained *Mātali*.

They then came to another hell. There they saw a cauldron of boiling and bubbling molten iron and beings who were cast headlong into the flaming iron cauldron where they were boiled. Terror-stricken and flabbergasted, King *Nimi* raised this question: "What on earth is that?"

> ***''Ye sīlavantaṃ samaṇaṃ brāhmaṇaṃ vā,***
> ***hiṃsanti rosenti supāpadhammā;***
> ***Te luddakammā pasavetva pāpaṃ,***
> ***teme janā avaṃsirā lohakumbhiṃ patantī'ti."***

(467th verse in Jātakapāḷi-2)

"Those of bad conduct who bully, harass, harm and insult virtuous and innocent monks and saints are destined to be reborn in this hell, and here they will be cast repeatedly headfirst into these cauldrons to boil and suffer," is the simple meaning.

Then, *Mātali* drove his chariot through another hell where King *Nimi* saw that the torturing *yakkhas* were enjoying torturing three-league tall hell-beings (normally both the bodies of heavenly beings and hell-beings are said to be very large). They threw burning iron-made lassos onto the victims' necks and pulled their heads back so as to bend them forward again before beheading them with big, sharp knives. Next, they stuck blazing iron spikes into the severed heads, put these into the cauldrons and enjoyed boiling them. Every time they cut the head off, a new head would appear on the tortured victims, and the hell *yakkhas* relentlessly repeated the same process of torturing again and again. The victims get tortured that way for an innumerable period of time in that hell until their bad *kamma* is paid off. King *Nimi* was scared and asked *Mātali* about the bad *kammas* they had done. Mātali, as usual, answered with a verse:

"Ye jīvalokasmi supāpadhammino,
pakkhī gahetvāna viheṭhayanti te;
Viheṭhayitvā sakuṇaṃ janinda,
te luddakammā pasavetva pāpaṃ;
Teme janā luttasirā sayan'ti."

(470th verse in Jātakapāḷi-2)

"Lord, those who torture birds in ways, like removing feathers or killing them by various means, so as to sell or eat their flesh fall into this hell and suffer in these terrible ways" is the meaning of it.

Then, *Mātali* drove the chariot ahead to another hell where they saw a nice, big river flowing peacefully. Hell-beings ran along the burning floor of that hell, hoping to drink water from the river, but as soon as they stepped on the riverbank it caught fire and the water turned to burning chaff. Those hell-beings burned with such an immense thirst that they ate that chaff. No sooner had they eaten the burning chaff then it descended, scorching the whole of their digestive track. They, clasping their heads out of unbearable pain, moaned, screamed and let out yells.

Seeing their woeful plight, King *Nimi* asked *Mātali* the reasons for which they had been reborn there and he answered this way:

"Ye suddhadhaññaṃ palāsena missaṃ,
asuddhakammā kayino dadanti;
Ghammābhitattāna pipāsitānaṃ,
pītañca tesaṃ bhusa hoti pānī'ti."

(474th verse in *Jātakapāḷi-2*)

"Earlier they were merchants who cheated their poor customers by mixing chaff, sand or something else with good grain. Now they are suffering for that by being tortured and eating burning chaff."

Again, the god *Mātali* carried the king in his chariot to another hell. There, they saw the hell-*yakkhas* chasing their victims. They shot them with arrows and spears from every side until their bodies looked like leaves, eaten by worms, become riddled with holes. So, King *Nimi* asked his question upon seeing this and *Mātali* answered thus:

"Ye jīvalokasmiṃ asādhukammino,
adinnamādāya karonti jīvikaṃ;
Dhaññaṃ dhanaṃ rajataṃ jātarūpaṃ,
ajeḷakañcāpi pasuṃ mahiṃsaṃ;
Te luddakammā pasavetva pāpaṃ,
teme janā sattihatā sayantī'ti."

(477th verse in *Jātakapāḷi-2*)

"Those who steal and rob goods such as grain, cattle, goat, gold, silver or whatever, and those who break into others' houses to steal property will fall into this hell and suffer by being hurt and wounded with various weapons at the hands of the hell-*yakkhas*," said *Mātali*.

Then, they proceeded to another hell where they saw the *yakkhas* cut the beings into pieces so that they became heaps of raw flesh. Some of them were made to lie flat on the burning floor, were tied by ropes made of iron and were then cut up. Seeing this scared the king and he asked the god *Mātali* why it was so.

"Orabbhikā sūkarikā ca macchikā,
pasuṃ mahiṃsañca ajeḷakañca;
Hantvāna sūnesu pasārayiṃsu,
te luddakammā pasavetva pāpaṃ;

Teme janā bilakatā sayantī'ti."

(480th verse in Jātakapāḷi-2)

"Hunters, butchers and fishermen who caught and killed animals and cut them into pieces to sell in stalls to make their living are fated tofall into this hell and be tortured in this way," *Mātali* answered.
Then they drove to another hell. There was a foul pit of excrement, piping hot and boiling, that expelled an offensive stench that filled the surrounding area. Starving beings, unable to tolerate their thirst and hunger, went to it and ate balls of it. The king wanted to know what kind of bad deeds they had done when in the human world to be doomed to suffer this way. *Mātali* answered thus:

> ***''Ye kecime kāraṇikā virosakā,***
> ***paresaṃ hiṃsāya sadā niviṭṭhā;***
> ***Te luddakammā pasavetva pāpaṃ,***
> ***mittadduno mīḷhamadanti bālā'ti"***

(483rd verse in Jātakapāḷi-2)

> ***''Rahado ayaṃ lohitapubbapūro,***
> ***duggandharūpo asuci pūti vāti;***
> ***Ghammābhitattā manujā pivanti,***
> ***bhayañhi maṃ vindati sūta disvā;***
> ***Pucchāmi taṃ mātali devasārathi,***
> ***ime nu maccā kimakaṃsu pāpaṃ;***
> ***Yeme janā lohitapubbabhakkhā."***

(484th verse in Jātakapāḷi-2)

"People who hurt or betray their trusting friends, and those who rob their good friends' wealth and hard-earned property wind up here. Also, people who take bribes from their good friends, who would have helped them in need, are doomed to fall into this hell to eat burning and piping hot balls of excrement!"

After that, god *Mātali* took the king to another hell where they found a vile lake of rotten blood and pus with a rank smell. Scorched by unbearable heat and intolerable thirst, beings ran to it and drank the rotten and putrefying blood and pus. To King *Nimi's* question "Why are beings reborn here friend *Mātali*?" he answered thus:

“Ye mātaraṃ vā pitaraṃ vā jīvaloke,
pārājikā Arahante hananti;
Te luddakammā pasavetva pāpaṃ,
teme janā lohitapubbabhakkhā’ti.”

(486th verse in Jātakapāḷi-2)

“Perpetrators, those who become defeated in their lay-life by committing gruesome crimes like matricide, patricide or assassinate an *Arahant,* as well as those of bad conduct who murder virtuous, moral and innocent *Buddhist* disciples, are doomed to fall into this hell and suffer excruciatingly. They drink from the vile lake of putrid blood and pus for a long, long time without seeing even the slightest glimpse of escape!”

Then the king was shown another hell. There, beings whose tongues were pierced by hooks, each with a hundred sharp barbs, were dribbling and flopping about in atrocious pain like fish on the shore. *Mātali* answered the king’s question thus:

“Ye keci sandhānagatā manussā,
agghena agghaṃ kayaṃ hāpayanti;
Kūṭena kūṭaṃ dhanalobhahetu,
channaṃ yathā vāricaraṃ vadhāya.”

(490th verse in Jātakapāḷi-2)

“Na hi kūṭakārissa bhavanti tāṇā,
sakehi kammehi purakkhatassa;
Te luddakammā pasavetva pāpaṃ,
teme janā vaṅkaghastā sayantī’ti.”

(491st verse in Jātakapāḷi-2)

“Earlier they were greedy and mean merchants who cheated their customers by lying and deceiving them, like those who catch fish with baited hooks. After death, such people after death fall into this hell, get hooked in this manner and are tortured severely.”

On their tour they arrived at another hell. There they saw women with wounded and disgusting bodies. They were buried waist deep in the blazing iron floor and their bodies were smeared with blood. They were holding their arms above them and wailing. While they

were there, from various directions came huge, burning rocks of iron, making loud and horrendous noises, that rolled over the victims' bodies, crushing them. No sooner had the rocks rolled over and crushed their bodies, then their bodies reappeared in the very same places again, due to the intense power of their unwholesome kamma. This process occurred continuously without a single pause! At times, two rocks or three to four rocks came from opposite directions, wringing and twisting the victims, wailing and shedding their hot blood there just as sugarcanes are twisted to make juice! Dumbfounded and horror-stricken, the king asked *Mātali* what *kamma* had made them suffer that way. Then *Mātali* answered:

''Kolitthiyāyo idha jīvaloke,
asuddhakammā asataṃ acāruṃ;
Tā dittarūpā pati vippahāya,
aññaṃ acāruṃ ratikhiḍḍahetu;
Tā jīvalokasmiṃ ramāpayitvā,
khandhātivattanti sajotibhūtā'ti."

(495th verse in *Jātakapāḷi-2*)

"Earlier, they were women who had led lustful and unclean lives, giving enjoyment to their paramours while being unfaithful to their husbands who had fed them and fulfilled all their needs in every possible way."

Then they proceeded to another hell where they saw an abyss of blazing coals. The *yakkhas* chased the victims to the abyss just as a cowherd would lead his herd to the cattle pen. The beings, who hesitated to run up to it, were shot with arrows or were attacked brutally with various weapons so that they would not have any choice left apart from running up to it. Then, the beings on the verge of the abyss were cast headlong into it, only to find that it was filled with blazing coals. Seeing this horrifying incident, King *Nimi* asked *Mātali* about their bad *kamma*.

''Ye jīvalokasmiṃ asādhukammino,
parassa dārāni atikkamanti;
Te tādisā uttamabhaṇḍathenā,
teme janā avaṃsirā narake pātayanti."

(498th verse in Jātakapāḷi-2)

"Lord, earlier they were men who seduced others' wives. Having enjoyed themselves through such evil deeds, they, after death, are doomed to this hell to suffer this way," *Mātali* explained.

At last, they arrived at another gruesome hell where beings were thrashing about and writhing in agony. There were harrowing torments, like forcing the victims to lie flat on their backs on the burning hell-floor, their bodies pierced with iron spikes to keep them in place before being sawed with big-toothed saws. Some of the victims were forced to swallow burning metal balls, whereas others were made to drink molten iron by force. King *Nimi*, having been terrified seeing all this, asked *Mātali* to explain how those beings came to be there.

> ***''Ye jīvalokasmiṃ supāpadiṭṭhino,***
> ***vissāsakammāni karonti mohā;***
> ***Parañca diṭṭhīsu samādapenti,***
> ***te pāpadiṭṭhiṃ pasavetva pāpaṃ;***
> ***Teme janā adhimattā dukkhā tibbā,***
> ***kharā kaṭukā vedanā vedayantī'ti."***

(502nd verse in Jātakapāḷi-2)

Mātali explained that this was the hell for false teachers who had led others astray by teaching that there is no evil in bad action and no merit in good action. This is also a place for people who not only do not believe in rebirth after death but also encourage others to not believe in rebirth.

Meanwhile in the *Tāvatiṃsa*, all the devas were sitting in the glorious *Sudhammā Hall* waiting for King *Nimi's* arrival. Even *Sakka* began to complain that it was taking *Mātali* a long time to return until he then realized what was happening. He called a young deva and commanded, "Go quickly, and tell *Mātali* to bring the king directly here. He is using up King *Nimi's* mortal life and must not go touring through any more hells."

When *Mātali* received the message, he instantly made all the other dreadful hells in the four quarters appear to King Nimi in a flash, like a person might look down at the ground from an aeroplane in the sky. *Mātali* added:

> ***''Viditāni te mahārāja, āvāsaṃ pāpakamminaṃ;***
> ***Ṭhānāni luddakammānaṃ, dussīlānañca yā gati;***
> ***Uyyāhi dāni rājīsi, devarājassa santike'ti."***
>
> ***(503rd verse in Jātakapāḷi-2)***

"Now, mighty monarch, you have seen where all the wicked go," *Mātali* said as he turned the horses and urged them on. "Let us hurry to the *Tāvatiṃsa*."

It is said in the "*Nimi* Jātaka" that the king then went to the *Tāvatiṃsa* and saw the splendid grandeur of the deva world.

If someone has done a bad deed, conducive to be reborn in the above-mentioned hells, and if it comes to his mind at his death bed, then that person is likely to be reborn to suffer in those hells. After going through excruciating suffering there, that individual may be reborn again in the animal world to endure the remaining suffering of those bad actions. Then, if there is anything remaining more to suffer, the being may be reborn in the *Peta* realms.

Therefore, we will describe and illustrate with some examples the suffering that *petas* go through in their realms of pain. We ourselves can witness the suffering that animals go through, to a certain extent, in their world as it is visible to our realm. Thus, there is no need to elaborate further on that particular realm.

The twelve peta worlds

1. *'Vattāsa Peta World'*, where the mucus and phlegm are taken as food.
2. *'Kuṇapa Peta World'*, where the dead bodies of humans and animals are taken as food.
3. *'Gūthakhādaka Peta World'*, where they feed on faeces.
4. *'Aggijālamukha Peta World'* where they have blazing mouths.

5. *'Sūcimukha Peta World',* where the *petas* have very small mouths, the size of a needle-eye, and an extra-large bulging stomach.
6. *'Taṇhā attika Peta World'*, where the victims always suffer from severe hunger and thirst.
7. *'Sunijjhāmaka Peta World'*, where the victims are with dried bodies, like burnt pillars.
8. *'Satthaṅga Peta World'*, where the victims have very sharp nails and other organs which can cut through their own bodies.
9. *'Pabbataṅga Peta World'*, where the *petas* have enormous bodies.
10. *'Ajagaraṅga Peta World'*, where the bodies of the victims are like those of pythons.
11. *'Vimāna Peta World'*, where the victims' experience alternates between comfort and suffering.
12. *'Mahiddhika Peta World'*, where the victims live in jungles with psychic powers.

What is meant here by the word "world" is "part" or "group." In addition to the above-mentioned '*Peta* Worlds' there are many other '*Peta* Worlds' where there are *petas* with bodies just like balls of flesh, *petas* with bodies just like skeletons, and *petas* with stinking mouths. Ven. *Lakkhana Thero* saw twenty-one of them. There are fifty-one sorrowful stories of such *Petas* in the book named "*Petavatthu.*"[7] We are drawing several of them from that book to illustrate the difficult and painful effects of bad actions and the lives they have had to live in those worlds.

Some stories of hungry ghosts *(peta)*

I) Story of a woman who did bad deeds (Mattāpeti Vatthu)

The father of *Bhūta* had two wives named *Tissā* and *Mattā*. *Mattā* died and, as a result of the bad deeds she had done, was reborn as a

[7] The "*Petavatthu*" has been translated into English as "Stories of the Departed" by I. B. Horner

hungry ghost. Once, she came to *Bhūta's* house when *Bhūta's* father was away. *Tissā* saw her and asked her who she was. The hungry ghost answered that she was *Mattā,* who had lived there, and then described the bad deeds that led her to become a hungry ghost.

> ***"Caṇḍī ca pharusā cāsiṃ, issukī maccharī saṭhā;***
> ***Tāhaṃ duruttaṃ vatvāna, petalokaṃ ito gatā'ti"***
>
> ***(137th stanza in Petavatthu — "Stories of the Departed")***

1. "I was a woman with rough characteristics like hatred, anger, jealousy, cunning and lived a miserly life. As a result of those bad deeds I became a hungry ghost."
2. Then *Tissā* asked her which bad deeds gave her a body covered with soil, and she answered that it was because she was jealous and hated to see *Tissā* in pleasing clothes, having happy chats with their husband, so she threw soil on *Tissā*.
3. Then *Tissā* asked which *kamma* caused her to be tormented by itching and she explained that it was the *kamma* of putting *kapikacchuno* (nettles) seeds on *Tissā's* bed to cause rashes and itchiness.
4. After that *Tissā* asked why she did not have any clothes. *Mattā* replied that she had once taken one of *Tissā's* garments and that was why she was now naked.
5. *Tissā* proceeded to ask why she had such a bad smell. *Mattā* informed her that she had robbed *Tissā's* perfumes and threw them into a cesspit and that is why she had a body smelling of excreta.

Mattā continued to explain her *kamma* in sequence as *Tissā* questioned.

So, you too should think about that so that you can avoid *kamma* causing rebirth in hell or the worlds of hungry spirits.

II) Sūkaramukha Petavatthu
(The peta with golden skin and a boar's mouth)

Ven. *Nārada Thero* once met a *peta* with a golden-coloured body and the mouth of a boar. He, with his divine eye, saw that the *peta* had

been a *bhikkhu* in the *sāsana* of *Kassapa Buddha*. His body was golden-coloured because he had protected *sīla* by way of the body, but due to not protecting *sīla* by way of speech he had the mouth of a boar.

(Petavatthu — "Stories of the Departed" p.3)

III) Serious effects of slandering

Ven. *Nārada Thero* saw another *peta* whose body was beautiful like that of a god, but his mouth stank and was full of worms which ate his mouth. He had been ordained as a *bhikkhu* during *Buddha Kassapa's* period, was well restrained by body but not by speech. He had created a split between two other monks. A short time after this he became ill, died and fell into hell. Only after a long, long time of suffering there was he reborn as a hungry ghost, or *peta,* of this kind.

(***Petavatthu — "Stories of the Departed" p.4)***

IV) The devotee who swore falsely to escape

The story of a female hungry ghost named "*Pañcaputta Khāda*" who was seen by eight *bhikkhus* in a village near the city *Sāvatthī* is as follows.

She was naked, very unpleasant in appearance, her body smelt rotten and she was covered with flies. In the morning she gave birth to five children, ate all of them because of severe hunger and then did the same in the afternoon. This would be repeated every single day.

This was due to a past life in which she had been jealous of her husband's second wife and had managed to abort the fetus developing in the second wife's womb. When she was asked about what had happened, she falsely proclaimed that she had not done such a thing and added that if she had done such a cruel thing she would eat her own children.

(Petavatthu — "Stories of the Departed" p.11)

V) *The story of the wife who received the curse that she made on her husband*

One monk went to the forest with some fellow monks to rest his legs, but after some time fell asleep. When he woke up he found that the other monks had all gone. In the evening time, a deity in the forest came to him in the guise of a human and attended to him, while at the same time a smelly, awful female hungry ghost came to the deity pleading for something to eat and wear. When the deity gave her divine clothes they became iron on her. When he gave her divine food it became faeces to her. Seeing this, the monk asked the deity the reason for that, and he replied that she had been his wife in his previous rebirth. When he offered alms in that life she had tried to stop him by opposing and cursing him, saying things like, "May this almsgiving be faeces, urine and pus to you in the next life and may the clothes you offer be iron clothes there." However much she cursed him, though, he neither took heed nor stopped his almsgiving. Finally, after death, as the result of his merit, he became a tree deity and obtained this divine abode with all its comforts, while she became a female hungry ghost with all the suffering thus entailed.

You, good people who may read this, please take this as an example and do merit more and more!

VI) The result for a bad mother who hated and cursed her virtuous child

One day Ven. *Revata Thero* was on the bank of the river *Gaṅga* when a female *peta* came to him and begged for some water to drink. The monk asked, "Why are you begging water from me when there is a river full of water here?"

Then the *peta* replied, "Venerable Sir, for the fifty years that have passed since the time of my death, I have never known food to eat nor water to drink. I am thirsty. If I fetch water from the river myself it turns into blood. So, I beg for it from you."

Ven. Revata asked why she suffered so and she answered thus: "Venerable Sir, I had a son named *Uttara*, a devotee possessing faith in the *Buddha*, who offered robes, meals, necessities (such as medicine to support life) and shelters to *bhikkhus* without my

consent. Overcome with envy, I reviled and even cursed him by saying, '*Uttara*! Without my consent you gave away robes, meals, necessities and shelters to *bhikkhus*. May this alms-giving be blood for you in your future existence'."

"As a result of cursing my own virtuous son, that *kamma* ripened with me and I became a *peta*. When I go to the river to fetch water to drink it becomes blood for me," replied the female *peta*.

VII) Initially a mischievous family, subsequently a suffering family

One *peta* burned himself by scattering burning chaff over his own head. Another one hit his head with a club. A female *peta* ate her own flesh and blood and another female *peta* ate faeces. Seeing all this, the left-disciple and great *Arahant, Moggallāna Thero,* asked the female *peta* who ate faeces the reason for such disgusting lives, filled with suffering, in that abode of woe.

She explained that the *peta* who burned himself by scattering burning chaff on his own head had been a heinous and bogus rice seller. He, with an eye to increasing profit, had been selling good rice with a portion of faux red rice at every sale. According to his bad deeds he had cheated customers and so now suffered like this.

The second *peta*, who split his head by hitting himself with a club, had been the son of the above-mentioned bogus merchant. He one day struck his mother (the merchant's wife) with some object and blamed her for not looked after his friends when they visited their home. Hence, he suffered after death owing to such impish ill-behaviour.

The *peta* who ate her own flesh and blood had been the wife of the son who had struck his mother. One day there had been a meat curry prepared for the whole family. Being driven by an irresistibly greedy appetite, she had eaten the whole lot stealthily. When she was asked about it she, out of shame for what she had done, did not tell the truth but instead falsely vowed, "If I ate that meat I will be reborn as *peta* who will eat her own flesh and blood." Now she is suffering for what she had done.

The last female *peta*, who ate faeces, had been the mother of that son who had struck her. In the human world, the merchant, the son, the daughter-in-law and this female peta had been a family. They had been well-to-do yet she had been very greedy. So, when the needy had come to her house asking for something she did not give them anything. “We do not have any of the things you are asking for, and if I’m wrong and I do not give you anything while I actually do have it, then I, in my next life, will be reborn as a *peta* who eats her own faeces!” She falsely and knowingly swore in such a way to cheat them. She said that she was suffering according to her greed and false promise.

(The commentary to Petavatthu — “Stories of the Departed” p.74)

VIII) The old couple’s tragedy

Ven. *Arahant Saṃkicca Thero* showed this group of *petas* to a monk who was disillusioned with *pabbajjā* life and was considering disrobing.

A god was riding a white elephant in the front and another god was traveling in a carriage drawn by horses. Behind them, a palanquin was being carried with a maiden whose beauty radiated in all the ten directions. They were followed by a group of *petas*, who, with weeping faces and holding clubs in their hands, walked with bodies that were battered and bruised by the clubs. At the same time, they censured one another with filthy words, fought among themselves and drank the pus and blood of one another. Despite how much they fought and drank one another’s pus and blood, they looked insatiable.

To the question raised by Ven. *Saṃkicca Thero*, “What made you come to this abode of woe?” they answered with the following reason.

“*Bhante*, we were a family when we were in the human world. The god riding a white elephant in front was my eldest son. The next one traveling by carriage, in the middle, was my second son. Because they gave alms unstintingly in their previous life, now, in this existence, they shine in splendour and enjoy happiness. The wise

maiden with soft eyes who went last in a palanquin was my youngest daughter. She too now enjoys her happiness, as she was used to giving away half her possessions in alms. Not only that, those three all developed faith in the *bhikkhus* while they took delight in giving alms. But we, who were their parents that time, never liked giving alms, nor did we encourage them. We only blamed them bitterly all the time for giving alms. We are now in this abode of woe, fighting and drinking each other's pus and blood, due to our bad deeds done in our previous life," answered the *peta*.

Seeing and listening to all this, the monk, who was thinking of disrobing, changed his mind and started to meditate. Finally, he attained Arahantship.

(Nāgapetavatthu — "Stories of the Departed" p.21)

IX) Night-time, divine comforts, daytime, suffering

When he was in the human world, he had been a fierce hunter in *Rājagaha* (now known as "*Rājgir*") his hands dripping with blood. He had a good friend who always tried to prevent him from killing defenceless birds and beasts by telling him the moral danger of doing bad deeds. Whatever his friend said always seemed to fall on deaf ears, so one day his friend gave him a good suggestion, "If you take life in the day time, restrain yourself from taking it at night." This he agreed to and held to. As a result of restraining himself from killing at night, he enjoyed delectable sensual pleasures in the company of young men and maidens in the *peta* world. But because he hunted in the day time, he became miserable during the day when he was repeatedly attacked and devoured by dogs.

(Migaluddakapetavatthu — "Stories of the Departed" p.78)

X) The bane of giving wrong judgments

An official who had served as one of King *Bimbisāra's* judges only observed *uposatha sīla* (the ten precepts) at night. When he died he became a '*Vimāna Peta'* and so received divine comforts as he had observed and protected *uposatha sīla* at night yet, during the daytime he suffered excruciatingly. He had razor-like, sharp and long fingernails, which in the absence of anything to eat, and being driven by his unwholesome *kammic* power, he used to scratch his own flesh

from his back and eat in unspeakable pain. This was due to his human life when he had been a judge and had slandered and given wrong and unjust judgements for the sake of bribes.

XI) Bad effects of preventing flower and incense offerings to Lord Buddha

Once Ven. *Arahant Kassapa Thero* met a *peta* who smelt putrid. His foul-smelling mouth was being eaten away by worms and he was repeatedly cut down with weapons, after which salt was sprinkled on the open wounds.

"What evil have you done in deed, word and thought?" asked *Bhante*. "Venerable Sir, I was the owner of a great wealth of grain in my previous life. My wife, daughter-in-law and members of the household would bring flowers, lotuses and fresh perfumes to the stupa for *puja,* but I forbade them from doing so. When a festival was held in honour of the stupa, which housed the relics of the homage-worthy *Buddha*, people like me showed their evil disposition. Eighty-six thousand of us each undergoes acute pain as a result. May people refrain from committing such evil!" he replied.

XII) Ahi Petavatthu

This *peta's* head resembled a human's while the body resembled that of a cobra. It was always slithering everywhere and clamouring with inexpressible pain. The great *Arahant, Moggallāna Thero*, while descending from the famous '*Gijjakūṭa* Rock', saw this *peta*, went to the Enlightened One and asked what *kamma* caused him to be a *peta* and suffer in this way. "Earlier, he was a farmer who had a paddy-field next to a temple. Devotees used to go to the temple across this paddy-field daily. When lots of people went across it, most of his crops were trampled upon and it brought him a big loss. He was so furious that he thought of setting fire to the temple to stop people from going across his field. So, with such foolish and vicious thoughts, in order to save his field from that threat, he torched the temple. He fell into the greatest hell of *Avīci* and suffered much for a long, long time for that bad deed. After he came out of hell he was

reborn as a *peta* like this to suffer what remained of that bad deed," the *Tathāgatā* replied.

So, may you, good people, be afraid of bad deeds and avoid them!

XIII) Playfulness caused him nakedness

This is going to be a brief account of the story. In India, there was a city called *Vesālī* in the kingdom of *Vajjī* and it was ruled by King *Ambasakkara* of the *Licchavī*. At that time, in the middle of the town, there was a big pool of mud which caused passersby a lot of difficulties. One vendor, who lived in the town, upon seeing the pool of mud felt inspired by faith in doing merit, took the white skull of an ox and laid it across the pool. People could now easily cross over the muddy pool by walking on the new skull-bridge. The vendor was also a faithful devotee of the triple gem. Once, he, in playfulness, without any ill-intent, had snatched away his friends' clothing while they had been bathing in the bathing place and then returned all of the clothes shortly after. Later, he was falsely convicted of his son-in-law's wrong-doing and was decapitated by King *Ambasakkara* as a result. After death, he became a *peta* with a beauty that radiated in all the directions. He had a swift divine horse for the merit of making the skull-bridge for people to cross easily, but he went everywhere naked. This was because he had embarrassed his friends by snatching away their clothing for fun.

Therefore, good people, never make fun of others in an embarrassing way.

(Ambasakkara-Petavatthu — "Stories of the Departed" p.84)

XIV) Never disgrace the righteous

Once, Ven. *Moggallāna Thero* saw a *peta* emerging out of a cesspool who was wretched, destitute and wailing. *Bhante* asked the reason for his situation, "Venerable Sir! I am a *peta* in the miserable abode of *Yama*, the king of death. The resident *bhikkhu* of my monastery was a jealous man, niggardly, miserly and abusive. Feigning friendship, he was in a habit of visiting my house with an eye for my possessions. Having believed in his words I reviled righteous *bhikkhus*. So, after death, I was reborn in this *peta* world. That

vicious *bhikkhu* too, after death, was reborn in this world as my servant. I eat people's faeces living in this cesspool and, as I previously had established myself on top of that evil-doing *bhikkhu's* advice, in the same way here I am established on top of his head and he, in turn, eats my faeces."

A similar story about a female devotee is found in the *Petavatthu*. Another *bhikkhu* committed the very same evil-deed, feigning friendship with a female devotee and they both, after death, fell into a *peta* world like this. That evil *bhikkhu* became the servant of that female *peta*. He ate her faeces while she ate those of other people's as a result of the *kamma* they had made.

Therefore, you good people, neither believe even a *bhikkhu's* statements without checking the facts, nor accuse righteous *bhikkhus,* which can throw you down to hell! (Even if you find them to be true, never accuse *bhikkhus* or anyone, for, it is neither your job nor does it lead you to overcome your defilements!)

(Gūthakhādaka Petavatthu— "Stories of the Departed" p.101)

XV) King Bimbisāra's 8400 former relatives, now petas

In *Phussa Buddha's* dispensation, these petas were poor people who had been in royal service, assigned to the task of preparing alms for the *Saṅgha*. However, as they were engaged in preparing the alms, their poor children cried for lack of food. At the outset they gave their children the leftovers of the *Saṅgha's* alms food. But, over time, they got used to giving their children the alms prepared for the *Saṅgha* even before offering them. Later on, due to this bad practice, they developed a lack of fear or shame to eat the alms themselves, even before they were offered. In the end, they burned down the *Saṅgha*'s refectory as well.

All the people who engaged in those evil deeds fell into hell and suffered excruciatingly for an incalculable period of time. To exhaust the remainder of the unwholesome *kamma*, they all had to suffer as hungry *petas* for the dispensations of seven *Buddhas*. Later, King *Bimbisāra* offered a grand alms-giving to the *Buddha* and the *Saṅgha* and shared the merit with them. They escaped from the *peta* world

and became *devas* due to the merit that was shared with them in this dispensation of *Gotama Buddha*.

Dear meritorious readers, just imagine how bitter bad deeds are!

Even though so many worthy stories like these are mentioned in the texts, for the sake of brevity I shall not explain much more. There are many stories of people who were reborn as *petas* just because of their mean miserliness. But, because it is a well-known fact, I did not think of including them here. Some petas suffer in that world tremendously, and then die to be reborn as animals and *Asuras* (another hell-existence of woe and suffering). *Asuras* are of five sub categories.

(Dhammapada commentary – Sakkapañha Vatthu)

XVI) The effects of not being restrained in word and deed

People who do evil by word and deed are reborn in the *niraya* hell, thereafter the animal world and then the world of *petas*. If they happen to come to the human world, they have to face the following sorts of suffering.

- Those who committed mostly killing get a short lifespan.
- Those who committed mostly stealing find their property is jeopardized.
- Those who committed mostly adultery have many enemies.
- Those who committed mostly lying are prone to be accused falsely.
- Those who committed mostly slandering frequently dispute with their friends.
- Those who mostly spoke harsh language get earfuls of unpleasant and rough noises and sounds.
- Those who mostly spoke empty words are not considered trustworthy.
- Those who enjoyed intoxicants are reborn as lunatics and maniacs.

(Saṃvattanika sutta —The commentary to the Aṅguttara Nikāya)

XVII) The dark side of the five-fold stinginess

The five-fold stinginess is:

1. *Āvāsa Maccariya*
2. *Kula Maccariya*
3. *Lābha Maccariya*
4. *Vaṇṇa Maccariya*
5. *Dhamma Maccariya*

1. Āvāsa Maccariya:

"*Āvāsa Maccariya*" means an attachment (usually) to the place where one lives. Because of that, after death, one may be reborn as a demon or *peta* spirit who goes here and there on the premises of that abode, its garbage and dirt on one's own head. Because of this defilement one may also be reborn in hell.

2. Kula Maccariya:

"*Kula Maccariya*" means the attachment to one's lay supporters. When a *bhikkhu* is attached to his lay supporters, he does not like them to give alms to other *bhikkhus* or monasteries lest they be displeased with him. Sometimes, he can suffer from such great grief that he may vomit blood, have loose bowels, or his bowels may even come out in broken pieces! Because of this strong defilement, one may become one who receives less material support.

3. Lābha Maccariya:

"*Lābha Maccariya*" means the attachment to the *Saṅgha's* property. To practice miserliness with the *Saṅgha's* property can manifest as making use of it as if it was one's own private property. This is a serious defilement that can lead one down to a lower rebirth, such as a hungry *peta* spirit, a demon or a big python. Because of this strong defilement, one may even be reborn in the *Gūtha Niraya* (a sub-hell consisting of rotting and burning faeces).

4. Vaṇṇa Maccariya:

“*Vaṇṇa Maccariya*” means the attachment to one’s own beauty, moral qualities or knowledge in *Dhamma* or other qualities. When this is strong, one does not like others to praise someone else’s beauty, moral qualities, knowledge in *Dhamma,* or other qualities. One tends to look down upon the qualities of others. Because of this strong defilement, one will not have a good complexion in future lives in *saṃsāra*.

5. Dhamma Maccariya:

“*Dhamma Maccariya*” means the attachment to one’s knowledge in *Dhamma*. The person who suffers from this does not like to teach others what he knows, even if he is asked to. He detests it when others outwit him in *Dhamma* or his branch of knowledge. In the *Aṭṭhasālinī*, the commentary to the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, it is mentioned that owing to this serious defilement, the person can be reborn in the *niraya* hell called *Kukkula* — the hell of extremely hot ashes.

Beings who do bad deeds are reborn in the four-fold hell and suffer there tremendously. If they happen to be fortunate enough to come back again to the human world, they have to suffer from the bad effects of the remainder of their bad deeds until they attain the supreme bliss of Nibbāna one day or another.

I am citing here some stories of people whose bad kamma produced bad fruit. So please, do read all these stories and take their moral into your life. You will then be in a better position to avoid such bad deeds and engage in merit.

Therefore, delay not!

Section Three: Examples of demerit ripening in the human world

The reason for *Khujjuttarā* to be reborn as a maid-servant

Even though *Khujjuttarā* was an eloquent speaker on the *Dhamma,* she was a maid-servant in the palace of King *Udena*. The reason for her to be reborn as a maid-servant was this.

During *Kassapa Buddha's* dispensation, in one of her previous lives, she had been a daughter of the treasurer's family and had had a friendship with a female novice. One day, when the female novice visited her house, because of their friendship she asked the female novice to pass her a bundle of jewellery that was a little out of reach. Although *Khujjuttarā* did not know it, the female novice had actually already attained Arahantship by then. This was the unwholesome action she did that led her to be reborn as a maidservant for five hundred lives.

(Manorathapūraṇī — Aṅguttara Nikāya Commentary)

So, dear readers, we must remember to keep company with *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs* very carefully, no matter how close they are to us!

The reason *Khujjuttarā* became hunchbacked

The female devotee *Khujjuttarā* was a slightly hunchbacked woman. She was so well-versed and eloquent in teaching the *Dhamma* that she taught the queen, *Sāmāvatī*, and her five hundred attendant women in such a way that they all became steam-enterers. After this she would continue to teach them the *Dhamma* on a daily basis. The reason for her to be reborn as a hunchback was because of an unwholesome act she once did out of playfulness. In one of her previous lives she had, just for fun, mimicked the way a *Paccekabuddha,* who had a hunch, walked.

(Aṅguttara Nikāya Commentary)

Why Ven. *Cūḷapanthaka* could not remember even one single stanza

Ven. *Cūḷapanthaka* was the younger brother of Ven. *Mahāpanthaka.* He was so hopeless that he could not even learn one single *Pāḷi* stanza by heart, even after trying his best for the four months from the day he came to wear the robe. The reason behind it was, when he was a well-versed *Dhamma* teacher in the dispensation of *Kassapa Buddha*, he mocked one of his students who had been a very slow-learner. The incident made the student so ashamed that he became even more feeble, until he eventually gave up learning altogether. In this life, that unwholesome *kamma* ripened by making him a slow learner in *Dhamma*. Later, according to the guidance and the incomparable compassion of the *Tathāgatā*, he was able to unearth his *pāramī* power and become one of the foremost eighty *Arahants* in this *sāsana* as Ven. *Cūḷapanthaka Thero*.

(Dhammapada commentary)

Dear Dhamma friends, there are slow-learners, the handicapped, as well as foolish people in society even today. The above two stories are examples of how unwholesome *kamma* gave its fruit without fail to ordinary people because they had made a mockery of others.

The story below is an example of how unwholesome *kamma* gave a virtuous *bhikkhu* its fruit, even after the attaining of *Arahantship*.

So, you learned and intelligent readers must never ever do such things, even for fun, as they are bound to give you shame and suffering in many more lives in the cycle of rebirth!

Why Ven. *Cakkhupāla* was blind

Once, in one of his previous rebirths, Ven. *Cakkhupāla* had been a skillful and famous doctor. One day, a poor blind woman came to him, beseeching him to cure her eyes. Because she had been eager and too poor to pay him, she had vowed that her whole family would become his servants. Believing her words, he cured her before long. But she, being cunning and disinclined to keep her vow after the recovery, thought of a plan to evade her word and so told him that

her eyes had not improved much. The doctor, however, had a lot of experience in the practice of medicine and knew that she was lying to him out of a desire to break her vow. Being angry with her, he treated her eyes again so that she became blind forever. As a result of that unwholesome *kamma,* he had been blind in many of his previous lives and in this last life he got an eye disease while he was meditating. He consulted a doctor and followed his treatments while maintaining his meditation with unyielding effort. Unfortunately, due to his unwholesome *kammic* power, he became blind for life on the same day he attained *Arahantship*. He was famously known as Ven. *Cakkhupāla Thero,* even though his previous name had been Ven. *Mahāpala Thero*.

(Dhammapada commentary)

Why King *Bimbisāra* was evilly tortured by his own son

King *Bimbisāra* was the sole ruler in the kingdom of *Māgada* in India during the time of the *Buddha*. Not only was he one of the most devoted followers of the *Buddha,* but he was a stream-enterer also. His son, Prince *Ajātasattu*, was greatly influenced by his evil friend, *Bhikkhu Devadatta*, and tortured his father by starving him almost to death. Later, because his father did not die from that, he became so evil that he ordered the royal torturers to split the soles of his father's feet, stuff them with salt and oil and then burn them with fire. It is mentioned in the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī,* the commentary to the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*, why the king had to go through such a terrible experience. In one of his previous lives, he had walked with shod feet disrespectfully on the compound of a sacred stupa, and then trod on a mat of the *Saṅgha*, which had been spread for sitting, with unwashed feet.

The cause of an infant's woeful rebirth

He was conceived in the womb of a courtesan. On the very day of his rebirth, knowing that it was a baby boy, his mother got someone to abandon him at a charnel house. Despite this, he was not harmed by any demon, *peta* or animal because he was protected by gods. Later, the *Buddha* saw him with his divine eye and went there. When other

people also gathered at the scene, the *Buddha* made pronouncements about the baby's past and future, answering the questions of the people.

"At a people's holy festival to honour the *bhikkhus* of the *Saṅgha* headed by the *Buddha*, that young man, suffering from a perversion of the mind, spoke harsh words that jarred the ears of virtuous men. He declared that the alms-food would have been worth more if it were discarded on to garbage heap than offered to those *bhikkhus*. That is the unwholesome action he did in word to be conceived in a prostitute's womb and abandoned at a charnel house after birth. Afterwards, however, he abandoned his evil thoughts and offered, with joy and faith in the *Buddha*, rice-gruel to the *Tathāgatā* residing at *Jetavana* monastery for seven successive days. That was the wholesome action he did in the past that provided him with safety, having been abandoned alone in a place like this. He will live a hundred years in this human world fully endowed with all sensual pleasures. On the dissolution of the body after his death, he will join the company of the *Deva*-king, according to the fruit of the merit he did."

(Kumārapetavatthu — "Stories of the Departed" p.75)

***Ghosaka*, the treasurer who was abandoned by his parents**

In one of his previous rebirths, *Ghosaka* had been wealthy. Once, the whole city was afflicted by a severe epidemic called "*Ahivātarogo*." He and his wife fled the city, along with their only child, for dear life. They had been making their way through a desert when they ran short of food and drink, and so suffered, facing much difficulty. While travelling this way, *Ghosaka* left his only child behind and went far ahead, telling his wife that if they both could save their lives now, then they would be able to have another child later. But because of the laments of his wife he fetched the child back. As a result of this *kamma*, in a later life, his foster father abandoned him and tried to kill him seven successive times. All attempts failed as *Ghosaka's* fortune was stronger. *Ghosaka's* good fortune was due to a previous

rebirth when he had been a dog in a period when there was a *Paccekabuddha*. When the *Paccekabuddha* went on alms round to the village through the jungle, the dog had a habit of running in front of the *Paccekabuddha* and barking at wild animals to make sure the way would be safe. Because of this merit he was saved from being killed.

(Dhammapada commentary)

Why *Sāmāvatī* and her five hundred attendants burned to death

Sāmāvatī was the queen consort of King *Udena,* and a stream-enterer. She and her five hundred female attendants were murdered by being locked in her palace, which was then set on fire so that they all burned to death. This plot was concocted out of jealousy by *Māgaṇḍiyā*, another consort of the king, and a band of evil-doers led by her uncle.

The *kamma* behind her unfortunate death was made in one of her previous lives when she had been a consort to a king, having had the same female attendants as she had in her existence during the time of the *Buddha*. One day, they went to have a bath and played in the water until afternoon. When they came out they felt cold and so wanted to make a fire to warm themselves. When they went in search of firewood and dried leaves they came across a thick bush. Without seeing a *Paccekabuddha* sitting and meditating there, they set fire to it. They were shocked when they finally did see the *Paccekabuddha*, presumed that he must have burned to death in the fire, and considered amongst themselves, "Our king honours this Paccekabuddha greatly. If he happens to learn that we burned him we will be punished severely. So that the king will know not of it, we will burn him to ashes here on the spot." Thinking thus, they fed the fire with more wood with that ill-intent. But, because the *Paccekabuddha* had been in *Nirodhasamāpatti,* the attainment of cessation, there, nothing happened to him. He lifted himself up from the ashes and departed by air. As a result of that unwholesome *kamma, Sāmāvatī* was reborn in hell and suffered a lot there. When she came out of it, for the next one hundred successive lives she was

burned like this. This *kamma* led to her unfortunate death in this life as well.

Why Ven. *Pūtigattatissa* had to suffer from a body covered in sores

In one of his previous rebirths, in the period of *Kassapa Buddha*, Ven. *Pūtigattatissa* had lived as a hunter and made his living by killing a lot of birds. When he caught a good number of birds, he would break their legs and wings so that they could not escape. He would then keep them for days without killing them, as he thought that the meat would rot if he killed them all at once. He had to suffer excruciatingly in hell and in many lives following that due to this way of living. In this last life where he attained *Nibbāna,* he lay on his deathbed with a festering and rotting body. However, due to the incomparable compassion of the *Buddha,* he was able to hear a sermon and attained *Arahantship* at his last moment.

The mystery that befell *Soreyya* the treasurer

Soreyya the treasurer was a father of two. One day, he went to bathe in the river with his friends and he happened to see Ven. *Arahant Mahākaccāyana Thero* putting on his robes after bathing. When he saw the golden complexion of the thero he thought, *What beauty! I wish this thero could become my wife, or that my wife had this complexion!* No sooner had he thought this evil thought then he turned into a woman. Being too ashamed of the unthinkably sudden change to be able to reveal it to anyone else around, he fled to the city of *Takkasila*. There he married a treasurer and gave birth to another two children. Later, when Ven. *Mahākaccāyana Thero* visited that city, he went to meet him and fell at his feet begging for a pardon. Then “she” became a “he” again. Disenchanted with all the things that he had to experience, he left everything behind and went forth with Ven. *Mahākaccāyana Thero* as his preceptor. He meditated well and, before long, he too became an *Arahant*. So, be very careful, even a bad deed in thought directed at an *Arahant* could throw you into great misery!

(Dhammapada commentary)

Why a *bhikkhu* was known as *Sappadāsa*

This *bhikkhu* was disappointed at not being able to develop his meditation and thought of committing suicide. One day, he saw that several *bhikkhus* had caught a cobra in a pot. Thinking that it was a good chance for him to die, he quickly asked them if he could be the one to throw the cobra away in the woods. Actually, his plan was to use the pretext of throwing the snake away so that he might instead get bitten by it. So, after going into the woods, he put his hand into the pot, but as he fished about for it, the cobra did not do him any harm, so he returned to the monastery. Afterwards, the *Buddha* revealed the reason behind this to the *bhikkhus*. In his third previous birth, this cobra had been his servant and he his master. In this life it could still sense the relationship that it had had with him. Due to that, it had not bitten him.

Animals may sense some matters that are unknown to humans.

(Dhammapada commentary)

Why Ven. *Sappadāsa* was discontented with his robe

Ven. *Sappadāsa Thero* failed in his attempt to commit suicide by being bitten by a cobra. However, this initial setback neither put him off the idea of committing suicide, nor did he think of disrobing to return to lay life. While continuing to lead the *bhikkhu* life with this resolve, one day he struck upon another way of killing himself. This time he thought of cutting his throat with a razor blade. So, according to his plan, he would sneak out to the jungle, hold the razor blade to his throat, recollect his *bhikkhu sīla* and then use the knife. However, as he recollected his *sīla* he found it to have been very pure all the time since his ordination day. Without intending it, his mind became extremely happy and rapturous. With that happiness as a support it became concentrated and, quite naturally, based on that concentration he found he could practice insight meditation to such an extent that right there and then his mind was released and he became an *Arahant*.

The *Buddha* revealed the reason for these things to happen to him. In *Kassapa Buddha's* time, a friend and fellow *bhikkhu* of this *thero*

was fed up with ordination life and had tried to disrobe. So, as a good friend, he had counseled caution and managed to stop the disrobing from happening. Then that *bhikkhu* told him that if he had disrobed he would have given all his requisites to the other monk before leaving. Upon hearing this, the *thero* was driven by a sudden whimsical desire to have his hands on those items, and with this thought in mind he praised the good side of the comforts of lay life. But his friend understood that the *thero* had been advising him with an intention of apprehending his requisites and so, in the end, he did not disrobe. That unwholesome *kamma*, however, resulted in him, even in this last life, becoming discontented with *bhikkhu* life.

Why the captain's wife was thrown into the sea

One day, in our *Buddha's* time, a ship sailing with *bhikkhus* on board suddenly came to a standstill in the middle of the sea. No matter how much it was examined, no mechanical fault could be found and yet, still the ship would not move. At last they thought of drawing lots to find out who had brought the bad *kamma* on board. The unfortunate one to pick the ill-fated lot was the captain's wife. They repeated this procedure another two times just to be sure. Three times successively she picked it out. Finally, when they did not have any other choice, the rest of the ship, with the consent of the captain, had her thrown into the sea with a pot of sand hung around her neck. She became prey for fish and turtles and the ship, without any further problem, made it safely to the shore.

As soon as that group of *bhikkhus*, who had been on board the ship, met and paid respect to the Blessed One they revealed the whole story and asked him to relate the cause behind that unfortunate woman's demise.

"In one of her previous rebirths, she had been a beautiful woman. There was a dog in her house who had been her husband three births before. Because of a strong *saṃsāric* bond, that dog used to follow her to each and every place she went. Villagers who had seen this made a mockery of her to such an extent that she became ashamed. She tried every possible way to stop the dog from following her but

failed. Getting angry with the beast, she drowned it with a pot of sand hung around its neck. Because of this evil, she fell into hell and suffered for a long, long time. After returning from hell, she died for a hundred lives in the same way that she had drowned the dog.

Therefore, dear meritorious readers, please be scared to do evil — even to avoid the criticism of one's peers!

(Dhammapada commentary)

The story of the burned crow

One day, in the city of *Sāvatthī*, a house caught fire and sent some burning straw up into the sky. The straw burned a crow flying by, causing it to fall to the ground and die. A group of *bhikkhus* who saw this, asked the *Tathāgatā* what previous *kamma* had caused this. He replied that in a previous rebirth the crow had been a farmer. On one occasion his bull, which he had brought to plough the field, had been very lazy. Being furious with it, he tethered the bull to a tree, surrounded it with straw and then set fire to it. The poor, dumb beast was burned to death. Because of this bad deed, he fell into hell and suffered much there. After this he himself become a beast that burned to death four times. On this occasion he was again burned alive for the fifth time as a crow.

So, good people, please do not fall into suffering by doing beastly actions like this.

(Dhammapada commentary)

The story of seven *bhikkhus* trapped in a cave

Seven *bhikkhus*, coming to see the *Buddha*, stayed in a cave on the way. While staying there, a big stone came loose from its place, fell down and blocked the entrance, locking them in. They had to suffer trapped in there for seven days without food and drink. After seven days, the stone fell away by itself, thereby freeing up the entrance. They came out very weak, and after taking food and drink went to see the *Tathāgatā*. They relayed the whole story to him and asked why it had happened. The *Tathāgatā* said, "You were all young cowherders in a previous life. One day, you saw a lizard creep into

an anthill. You got together and closed all the openings of the anthill so that it could not come out. The beast suffered there for seven days. On the seventh day, you felt pity for it and let it go. It was very weak after it came out, but it did not die on account of its ordeal. This was the bad deed you did to suffer without food and drinks, not only today, but also for fourteen lives previous to this."

(Dhammapada commentary)

Aputtaka, the treasurer who was unable to consume his own wealth

Even though he was a rich treasurer in the city of *Sāvatthī, Aputtaka* never wore new clothes, only rags. He did not think of eating good, delicious food or travelling by a luxurious vehicle. He lived his life like a beggar until he passed away. The reason why the treasurer's mind did not incline to enjoying the use his wealth was as follows.

Once, in one of his previous lives, he had been a rich treasurer and had seen the *Paccekabuddha Tagarasikhī* coming to his house. Seeing him, he asked his wife to give alms and left home for some work. He met the *Paccekabuddha* on his way back home and peeped into the bowl while asking whether he got alms. Owing to his miserliness, he was unhappy at seeing the delicious food in the bowl that his wife had offered. Due to the merit of ordering his wife to give alms food, he had been reborn seven times in heaven and seven times as a rich treasurer. But, because of being unhappy due to his miserliness, he never had the good fortune to enjoy his wealth.

So, meritorious readers, learn how to do meritorious acts with thoughts pure in three ways, and then carry them out so that they become more and more meritorious!

(Dutiya Aputtaka Sutta – Saṃyutta Nikāya SN 3:20 "Childless (2)")

The story of the beating sugarcane

A miser, after death, was reborn in the *Peta* world. A sugarcane plantation appeared to him, due to some previously made merit, and when he became hungry and thirsty he would go to it thinking to enjoy the juice of a piece of sugarcane. However, as soon as he went

there, the sugarcanes would twist themselves, beat him and cut him with their leaves of razor-sharp edges until he ran away crying in pain. One day an *Arahant* who walked by this field heard the screaming of the *peta* and understood. The *peta* asked him why this was happening, and to help him so that he may enjoy the juice. The *thero* told him a way for him to take those sugarcanes. The *peta* did what the *thero* said and satisfied his thirst and hunger. The reason for his predicament was that in one of his previous rebirths he had been walking with a bundle of sugarcane, munching on one. A poor man saw him and came after him asking for a piece of cane. Being angry, and without turning back, he threw one in the man's direction. For giving a piece of cane, he received a field of sugarcane, but he didn't have the merit to take any without being tormented.

(Petavatthu — "Stories of the Departed."
Ucchupetavatthu — "The story of the sugarcane" p. 98)

Ven. Arahant *Losaka Thero's* long-suffering from bad *kamma*

A child that lived by begging was ordained by the great elders Ven. *Arahant Sāriputta* and *Moggallāna Theros* and was given the name *Losaka*. *Losaka Thero* never seemed to get enough food. If Ven. *Sāriputta Thero* went on *piṇḍapāta* (alms round) with him he also did not receive alms. Although Ven. *Losaka* may have been unfortunate with regard to receiving food he was, however, fortunate enough to have enough *pāramī* power to become an *Arahant*.

When *Losaka Thero* went on his alms round, even though people approached him to offer food, as they came closer, his bowl would appear as though it was already full and so they would leave without having given anything. Even if they did manage to serve him, the food became so dried out that only a morsel remained, barely enough for him to sustain himself. Throughout his life he had never been able to receive enough alms to meet his fill. Knowing this, on his final day (*parinibbāna*[8]), Ven. *Arahant Sāriputta Thero* sent a

[8] '*Parinibbāna'* is the time when an *Arahant* passes away

bowl of delicious food with another *bhikkhu*. However, while on the way, that *bhikkhu* ate it all without giving any to *Losaka Thero*. Ven. *Sāriputta Thero* was moved when he came to know that this had happened, and out of compassion he himself brought a bowlful of '*Catumadhura'*[9] to *Losaka Thero*. He sat with *Losaka Thero*, and without letting him touch the bowl, managed to feed him. It was the only day in his whole life that Ven. *Arahant Losaka Thero* managed to eat his fill.

The *Buddha* declared the previous *kamma* that led to this after being requested to do so. "*Bhikkhus*, after *Losaka Thero* had been ordained in the dispensation of *Kassapa Buddha* he protected his *bhikkhu sīla* and practiced meditation well. But he was jealous when people attended to an *Arahant,* not knowing that he was an *Arahant*. He stopped devotees from giving the four requisites to the *Arahant bhikkhu* out of envy and avarice. One day, devotees wanted to give a bowl of milk-rice to the *Arahant bhikkhu* and he, in a rage, burned it without giving it to the monk. Because of this powerful evil deed, he was reborn in hell and suffered there for many billions of years. After that, for five hundred rebirths he was reborn as a hungry *yakkha,* and for all those rebirths he ate his fill only once, and that was a heap of afterbirth.

Following that, he was reborn as a dog for five hundred births, during which he ate his fill only once. That was a heap of vomited rice. On top of this, he had to suffer immensely whenever he was reborn in the human world.

In his final rebirth he was reborn to a gypsy woman. From the day of his conception, the whole gypsy village went to ruin. Many people lost their jobs and many went into crippling debt. So, the villagers got together to find who was responsible. On finding that the

[9] 'Catumadhura' is a tonic made by cooking a mixture of equal portions of ghee (or sesame oil), butter, jaggery and honey. This is permitted by *bhikkhu vinaya* for sick *bhikkhus*.

pregnant woman was the one to blame, they expelled her from their community.

She too suffered a lot from hunger going, from place to place without having enough food to eat, drink to quench her thirst, clothing for her body or a place to live. After she gave birth to him, she raised him facing a thousand difficulties, only until he was able to walk and live alone. At that point she gave him a begging plate, left him alone on the road, and from that day on he grew up eating just waste food and slops."

Dear *Dhamma* friends, just imagine how Ven. *Losaka Thero* suffered for preventing alms to be given to an *Arahant bhikkhu*. He only blocked a single day's meal from being given to an *Arahant,* but he suffered excruciatingly in hell for a very, very long time. Moreover, he suffered five hundred lives as a hungry *yakkha*, five hundred lives as a hungry dog, a number of lives as a human and also as an *Arahant* in his final birth!

Therefore, it is worth being afraid of and avoiding unwholesome actions!

(Jātaka commentary — No. 41 Losaka Jātaka)

Twenty-thousand years in the robe then became a cobra

This *bhikkhu* had been ordained in the time of *Kassapa Buddha* and lived the righteous life of a monk for twenty thousand years. One day, when he was travelling by canoe he happened to take hold of a nearby tree leaf and it broke away in his hand. As he had done it unthinkingly (*assatiyā*), for a *bhikkhu* there is no offence. But, because this bhikkhu fanatically protected his *bhikkhu sīla,* he was consumed with doubt as to whether or not he had committed an offence. On the way, he did not meet any other *bhikkhus* to confess and purify himself (a minor *vinayakamma* held between two bhikkhus to purify their *sīla*). So, at the time of death, he remembered this and was reborn as a divine cobra called '*Erakapatta'*. He had to live as a divine cobra for a long, long time until our *Buddhasāsana* appeared.

He fell into this lower rebirth merely due to not being able to confess and purify his doubt about plucking a tree leaf. Just imagine the result if he had committed a great offence!

(Dhammapada commentary)

The childless treasurer

In one of his previous rebirths, a treasurer, driven by greed for wealth, murdered the only son of his brother. Because of that, he suffered a very long period of time in hell. Later, he got a chance to offer alms to the *Paccekabuddha Tagarasikhī*, and on account of that was blessed to be reborn as a rich count seven successive times. But he was always childless and his wealth was confiscated during each of these lives. Further, after death, he fell into 'Roruva', the third great hell down from the top.

Thus, the Buddha revealed the reason for being childless.

Suppabuddha the leper

One day, *Suppabuddha*, a leper, became a stream-enterer after listening to a sermon delivered by the Buddha. On his way home, he died due to an attack from a cow that had newly given birth to a calf. On hearing what had happened, the bhikkhus reported it to the *Tathāgatā* and asked where he had been reborn and what bad deed he had committed to have leprosy afflict his entire body.

The Buddha related that he had earlier been reborn in the second heaven above the human world, the T*āvatiṃsa*. In one of his previous rebirths, he had cleared his throat and spat on the *Paccekabuddha Tagarasikhī* and because of that he had been reborn in hell and suffered there for a long time. In his human life he suffered from leprosy due to that same incident.

Therefore, everyone should be afraid of bad deeds, big or small!

(Dhammapada commentary)

Why Prince *Bodhirāja* was childless

Prince *Bodhirāja* built a palace called "*Kokanuda*" and invited the Buddha for the inauguration ceremony. He spread a long white cloth from the entrance and made a determination that if the Buddha walked on it, it would mean that he would have children in the future. When the Buddha came near the cloth he asked Ven. *Ānanda* to remove it, and once he had done so he continued to walk inside without stepping on the cloth. When the prince asked about this, the Buddha told him that he did it because of the prince's determination. The prince was not going to have children owing to a previous unwholesome *kamma*.

In one of prince *Bodhirāja*'s former lives, he and his wife had been sailing across the sea when they were shipwrecked. They went to a nearby island which happened to have a large number of nesting birds and eggs. Because they had no other way to survive they lived on the birds and their eggs. Because of this evil deed, they became childless.

(Dhammapada commentary)

Why *Mallikā Devī* fell into the *Niraya* just for seven days

Mallikā Devī was the queen consort of King *Kosala* in the city of *Sāvatthī*. She was very devout and faithful to the Buddha. She frequently did good things like listening to the *Dhamma*, offering alms, observing *sīla*, memorizing passages of the *Dhamma* and so on. She also helped to arrange the "incomparable alms-giving ceremony," spending fourteen million gold pieces. This is something which is only done once in each *Buddhasāsana*. At the time of death, however, she remembered the bad deed of having lied about having sexual intercourse with a dog, fell into niraya hell and suffered there for just seven days. Even though she had been reborn in hell, after she departed there she was reborn in the *Tusita*, the fourth heaven above the human realm, because she had accumulated a lot of merit in her past human life.

The reason for Princess *Rohinī's* skin eruption

Princess *Rohinī* was the younger sister of Ven. Arahant *Anuruddha*. She suffered severely from a serious skin eruption. Later, because of the counsel of Ven. *Anuruddha Thero,* she sold her jewellery and with the sum of money received built a two-storied refectory to offer to the *Buddha* and *Saṅgha*. She always made a lot of merit, and by the accumulated power of that, her skin eruption was cured before long.

The *Buddha* revealed the reason for her skin eruption that had been hidden behind the curtain of the unknown past. Once, when she had been the queen consort of the king of the city of *Benares*, she had become very envious of one of the other consorts in the king's harem. To hurt her, she had someone bring nettles and grind them. She put that powder on her rival's bed and body out of hatred. The consort, suffering from severe and unbearable itching and skin irritation, ran to her bed and laid down, only to suffer there more and more. Because of this unwholesome action she performed in that life, she suffered from such a severe skin eruption that she was unable to face society.

(Dhammapada commentary)

Ven. Kuṇḍadhāna Thero's mystery

From the day he became a *bhikkhu,* a woman always appeared to be following him. *Kuṇḍadhāna Thero* did not see her but others who did spoke badly of him. Even other *bhikkhus* who saw her accused him of breaking his *sīla*. Because the *thero* could not see the woman he too retaliated and accused them of telling lies and making false charges.

Later, King *Kosala* discovered that it was not true but an illusion and that it had happened due to a *kamma* from the past.

Upon request, the Blessed One revealed the *thero's* previous *kamma*. "This *bhikkhu* was reborn as a god in heaven during the *sāsana* of *Kassapa Buddha.* At that time there was a split in the friendship of two *bhikkhus* which made them doubt each other

groundlessly. One day, when these two *bhikkhus* were travelling along a forest road, one venerable needed to answer nature's call and so he went into the roadside woods while the other waited for him to return. When the *bhikkhu* came out of the woods, a deva, with the intention of making a joke, morphed into the form of a woman and followed that venerable without his knowledge, but making sure that the woman was clearly visible to the monk who was waiting. When he saw the woman following after the venerable and suspiciously looking here and there, with unkempt hair, adjusting her clothing and wiping off sand from her hands, he thought that this *bhikkhu* might have gone into the woods not to pass urine but to have intimate relations with the woman. With such a kind of thinking he accused him of impure *sīla*. Then the other *bhikkhu* also blamed him in turn, and their friendship split — they even refused to observe the *uposatha* together.

When all this had happened, the god understood the gravity of his joke and came to the two monks to beg their pardon for the joke he had made. But even though the god had explained the situation, from then on, they couldn´t live the same way that they had previously. The god, owing to his unwholesome *kamma*, fell into the *niraya* hell "*Avīci"* and suffered there for a long, long time. In this last life too, that *bhikkhu* had to suffer in such a way due the remaining power of that bad deed."

(Aṅguttara Nikāya commentary)

The story of the fish *Kapila*

One day, some fishermen in the city of *Sāvatthī* caught a golden-coloured fish from the river '*Aciravatī*'. They were very happy seeing that fish and brought it to the King *Kosala*. He, in turn, brought it to the Blessed One. Though it was golden in colour, when it opened its mouth a bad odour filled the whole area. When the Blessed One was asked about it, he revealed the reason behind the situation.

"O King, this fish was once reborn as a human in the time of *Kassapa Buddha* and lived a *pabbajjā* life[10] for twenty thousand years. He was a well-learned and eloquent preaching *bhikkhu* who had sound knowledge in *Dhamma* and *Vinaya* as well. Over time he gathered a lot of students around him. Due to these conditions he started to become well-known as well as receive lots of gains. He became so intoxicated with his great learning, the large number of *bhikkhus* around him and craving for gain that he became quite arrogant. Eventually he went down a wrong path by deliberately misrepresenting the teaching: he taught the bad as the good and impermissible things as permissible. Due to this wrong course of action, good and virtuous *bhikkhus* left him, which in turn was a significant cause for the doctrine to decline. Therefore, he, after death, was reborn in the *niraya* hell '*Avīci*'."

"Ven. *Sodhana Thero*, who was his brother, became an *Arahant* and attained *parinibbāna*. But, because his mother, *Sādhinī,* and younger sister, *Tāpanā*, both followed his example and reviled virtuous and good *bhikkhus*, they too both went to the same *niraya* hell. They all suffered there for a long, long time in the period leading up to the appearance of our *Gotama Buddha*. When *Kapila* came out of that realm he was reborn as a fish with golden colour. His colour was golden because in *Kassapa Buddha's* dispensation he preached *Dhamma* without corrupting it for a certain period of time and he preached *Dhamma* on *Buddha's* virtues as well. Because he accused good and virtuous *bhikkhus*, when he opens his mouth a bad odour pervades the surrounding vicinity."

(Dhammapada commentary)

Why the devotee *Mahākāla* was beaten to death

Ven. *Mahākāla thero* was a stream-enterer. One day he went to a night-time *Dhamma* talk at *Jetavana* monastery. The following morning, as he was washing his face in a pond nearby, a gang of robbers who had robbed a house the night before came running

[10] *Pabbajjā* – The going forth (to become a monk)

towards him. When the robbers ran past they left their stolen goods next to him to mislead the chasing owners. The trick worked and after seeing the stolen goods with *Mahākāla,* the owners beat him to death, accusing him of pretending to be a devotee while robbing houses. Knowing him to be innocent, the *bhikkhus* were very sad to witness the incident. They reported everything to the *Buddha* and asked what had been the bad *kamma* to cause it. The *Buddha* said: "In one of his previous rebirths, he had been in love with a woman who had a husband. To get her, he made an unfounded charge against her innocent husband and killed him. Owing to that bad deed, he was killed in the same way."

That habits of *saṃsāra* follow us

One day five people came to listen to the *Dhamma* and four of them did not pay close attention. While listening one was dozing off, one was shaking a branch of a nearby tree, another one was drawing lines on the ground with his fingers and the fourth one was watching the sky. Only one of them was listening to the talk with full attention. Seeing this, Ven. *Ānanda* asked the *Buddha* for the reason. "*Ānanda*, the one who was sleeping was reborn as a serpent for the five hundred preceding rebirths. The one who was drawing lines was previously an earth-worm. The one who was shaking a branch of a nearby tree was previously a monkey. The one who was watching the sky was previously an astrologer and the one who was listening to the sermon well was previously a *brahmin*. They all acted according to their habits developed in *saṃsāra*," replied the *Buddha*.

Similarly, Ven. *Arahant Pilindavaccha* used to address people as *"Vasala"* (outcast), because he had been reborn as a *brahmin* for the preceding five hundred rebirths. Not only that, another *Arahant*, once, while walking on the road, jumped over a big pool of mud and then waded across a smaller pool of mud. The reason being that he had been reborn as a monkey for several successive rebirths prior to that human life as an *Arahant*. The commentary to the *Jātaka* stories has it that the characteristics of beings, like being disobedient or obedient, being cheated by women, acting foolishly, being grateful and acting wisely are all habits learned in *saṃsāra*. In most *Jātaka*

tales the Buddha, regarding the various people there, would say, “O *Bhikkhus*, this person acted this way not only in this life but also in many previous lives.”

So, understanding that the habits from *saṃsāra*, good or bad, follow us, do engage only in the good!

The man who ate faeces for fifty-five years

This individual was called *Jambuka* and was an *Ajīvaka* (a follower of one branch of ascetics now no longer extant). From his childhood he did not eat anything else but human faeces and, due to this, his parents handed him over to the *Ajīvakas* so that he would be trained as one of them. The *Ajīvakas* ordained him by removing his head hair using a traditional and very painful way — they pulled out each head hair individually using a palmyra seed. He lived naked, slept on the floor and never used a bed. One day, the Blessed One, having seen that he had well-developed *pāramī,* came to his place and gave a *Dhamma* discourse. At the end of the discourse he became an *Arahant*.

The *Buddha* explained the background that lead to his predicament.

“He had been a *bhikkhu* during the time of *Kassapa Buddha* and had been very friendly with families of supporting devotees. One day a guest *bhikkhu* who was an *Arahant* arrived. Being very pleased at seeing his composure, people offered him alms, provided a barber to shave his head, cloth for a robe and a bed to sleep on. The resident *bhikkhu* was not pleased to see all this, as, out of miserliness, he did not like his devotees to treat a second one so well. So, he went to the *Arahant* and admonished him saying, “*Āvuso*!” (“Friend” a form of address among *bhikkhus*), “You’d be better off eating human faeces than eating the alms offered by the devotees, better off having your hair uprooted with a palmyra seed than getting it shaved, better off going naked than wearing the robes that the devotees gave you and better off sleeping on the floor than sleeping on the bed they have provided.” Thinking to himself that such a foolish *bhikkhu* would do a lot of bad deeds if he were to remain there, the Arahant left that place without any prior notice.

Owing to this powerful unwholesome verbal action, he died and was reborn in the *niraya* hell called *"Avīci."* He suffered excruciatingly there for the whole interval until our *Gotama Buddha's* dispensation appeared. After the appearance of our dispensation, he departed that hell, was reborn in the human world, was given the name, "*Jambuka*" and lived for fifty-five years eating faeces. Here, he experienced the result of the residual kamma in a similar way to the four ways he had cursed the Arahant. Finally, due to the Buddha's compassion, he attained Arahantship complete with the special four analytical knowledges — *catupaṭisambhidā ñāṇa*.

So, dear meritorious readers, just imagine, nothing could supplant his bad deed even if he lived a good *pabbajjā* life of twenty thousand years. So, dare not do unwholesome actions ever by word, deed or thought!

(Dhammapada commentary)

Why Ven. *Arahant Lakuṇḍaka Bhaddiya* was reborn short

Ven. *Lakuṇḍaka Bhaddiya* was an *Arahant,* but being very short and ugly, many mischievous monks, not knowing that he was an *Arahant*, teased him and made a mockery of him. Even so, he tolerated all of it. One day, the *Buddha* revealed the reason for him to be reborn so short. After *Kassapa Buddha* had attained *parinibbāna*, devotees got together and thought of erecting a stupa seven *yojanas*[11] high and holding an inauguration ceremony on a grand scale, thus incurring great cost. As he was participating in an official role there, he suggested that the stupa be made shorter, a height of only one *yojana*, and that the inauguration ceremony should be on a much smaller scale than they had initially wanted. This was the demerit he made to be reborn short, ugly and subject to being mocked as well.

So, dear meritorious readers, never try to destroy others' faith in any way and make their merit less in value.

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[11] *'Yojana'* — a measurement used in the past and sometimes considered to be 20km

(154th Apadāna)

Why Ven. *Arahant Moggallāna* was severely beaten before entering *parinibbāna*

Ven. *Arahant Moggallāna* was the *bhikkhu* second only to the *Buddha* in the ability of exercising psychic and supernatural powers. Many other religious leaders and their followers resented this, as their gains were declining due to his popularity and so, one day, they paid a gang of bandits to beat him to death.

When *Bhante* was in meditation in a rock-cave called *Kālasilā* they tried to attack him, but due to *Bhante's* immense powers he managed to flee the place unharmed. That day the gang of bandits' efforts were utterly hopeless. This was repeated another two times, but on the third attempt *Bhante Moggallāna* searched with his divine-eye to find the reason why this was repeatedly happening. When he understood that this was due to a result of bad *kamma* and there was no way of avoiding it, he stayed in that very place without fleeing.

That day, breaking into the cave, the bandits beat him to the extent that his bones were smashed to pieces the size of rice grains. Thinking that the *thero* had died, they left him and fled. But the *thero* did not die then and there, for he was a very powerful *Arahant*. He repaired his body by his psychic powers and visited the *Buddha,* who already knew of the incident. Having paid respect to the *Buddha* he went back to the cave and attained *parinibbāna*.

The *Buddha*, upon request, revealed the cause. Such a painful end befell him because of a weighty evil deed he had done in one of his previous rebirths. In one life, he had married a cruel and selfish woman who had not liked or treated well her husband's blind, elderly parents. She considered his parents' presence in his house a nuisance. So, she nagged him about their faults all day long, encouraging him to get rid of them as soon as possible. After some time had passed, being misled by his wife and believing her, he began to lose faith and love for his parents. One day, he tricked his blind, elderly parents by taking them to the jungle, and beat them to

death under the pretext of being a thief. As matricide is one of the unwholesome five weighty *kammas,* he fell into the *niraya* hell "*Avīci*" and suffered there excruciatingly. After arising from there, in every following rebirth, including the last, he died after being beaten by others.

(Apadāna)

Why Ven. *Arahant Sīvalī* suffered in his mother's womb

Ven. *Arahant Sīvalī* had to suffer in the womb of his mother, *Suppavāsā*, for seven years, seven months and seven days while she too suffered greatly throughout the pregnancy. For the final seven days, she suffered a lot from the difficulty of an obstructed delivery.

The *Buddha* revealed the reason for this. Once, when the Ven. *Sīvalī* had been a king, he had been engaged in warfare with a weak kingdom. But he failed to cause it to surrender. So, he continued to raid that country for seven years and seven months, closing all the ways and means of supplying food and drink from outside, but this also failed. Finally, following his mother's advice, he secretly closed the only remaining tunnel which was used to supply the country with food and drink. Only then did the country surrender. Because he had unduly used his power to let innocent people suffer in that life, in this life he had to suffer in his mother's womb for the same long period of time. His mother in that life was now *Suppavāsā,* who also had to suffer in pregnancy for giving the bad advice that encouraged him to follow the wrong course of action.

So, dear meritorious readers, please do not misuse your powers in any way whatsoever!

(Aghatarupa Jātaka)

The yakkha Sūciloma

During the time of Lord *Buddha*, there was a *yakkha* with body hairs like needles. One day, the Blessed One went to his abode and tamed him by delivering a *Dhamma* talk, after which *Sūciloma* became a stream-enterer. The Blessed One revealed the past *kamma* that led him to become a *yakkha* as follows.

In *Kassapa Buddha's* period, *Sūciloma* had been a *bhikkhu*. One day he arrived at the monastery after a long and tiring journey. With his body covered in sweat, he lay down on a *Saṅgha* bed rather disrespectfully, without even spreading a bed-sheet of his own. Even though he lived a virtuous *bhikkhu* life of 20,000 years, owing to this bad *kamma* he became a *yakkha* with body hairs like needles. Despite his being a *yakkha,* the Buddha saw his *pāramī* power and helped him.

The above account is related in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* commentary, the *Sāratthappakāsinī*. But according to the commentary to the *Suttanipāta*, the *Paramatthajotikā*, the story of the past life is a little different. There, it says that he had been a devotee, not a *bhikkhu.* One day he had gone to the monastery to listen to a *Dhamma* talk and soiled the *Saṅgha's* cloth rather disrespectfully.

The yakkha Kharaloma

This *yakkha* was a friend of the above-mentioned *yakkha Sūciloma*. His body and hairs were very rough. He too had lived during the time of *Kassapa Buddha's* dispensation as a devotee. One day, he went to the monastery to listen to the *Dhamma*. When he arrived, he sat on some expensive carpets without spreading his upper-cloth[12] below him and asked someone to massage his body with oil that also belonged to the *Saṅgha*. Owing to both reasons — using the *Saṅgha*'s carpet and oil — he became a rough body-haired yakkha. This is according to the *Sūciloma Suttavaṇṇanā,* which is in the commentary to the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. But the story is a little different according to the *Paramatthajotikā*, the commentary to the *Suttanipāta*. It says that he became a *yakkha* because he had applied the *Saṅgha's* oil without permission.

Why the novice *Uttara* was impaled

A *sāmaṇera* (novice monk) called '*Uttara'* was one of the obedient students of Ven. *Arahant Sāriputta*. One day when Ven. *Sāriputta*

[12] Lay people should not use the *Saṅgha* 's things

was sick, *Uttara* went to find some medicine. On the way, he saw a brook and thought of washing his face. In the meantime, a gang of robbers, who had stolen a bundle of money, ran past him, as they were being chased by a band of village children. As they ran past they slipped the bundle of money into the bowl of the *sāmaṇera*. The children chasing them saw the bundle of money sticking out of the bowl and thought that the *sāmaṇera* must be one of the thieves. They beat him and handed him over to a royal minister called *Vassakara*.

The minister promptly ordered the *sāmaṇera* to be impaled without any further investigation because he knew him and had long harboured hatred for him. His hatred was due to the insult he felt he had endured on a previous occasion when his daughter's marriage proposal had been rejected by the (soon to be) *sāmaṇera* owing to his plan to ordain.

While suffering on the stake, the *sāmaṇera* thought only about how to send medicine to his teacher, Ven. *Sāriputta*. Because of his delay, Ven. *Sāriputta* searched with his divine-eye for the reason and saw the *sāmaṇera's* plight. He informed the *Buddha,* and accordingly the Blessed One at the head of a group of the *Saṅgha* came to the scene. The *Buddha* delivered a *Dhamma* talk disclosing how bad *kamma* had led to the current predicament. At the end of the sermon the *sāmaṇera* attained *Arahantship*.

In one of his previous rebirths, when the *sāmaṇera* had been a child, he had caught a fly and impaled it on a neem stick. Not only that, but in another rebirth, he had been angry with his mother and cursed her saying, "May you be impaled for a whole day!" Because of both bad *kammas* he had been impaled for five hundred rebirths on a neem stake for a whole day.

(Saddhammālaṅkāra)

Queen *Padumavatī's* good *kamma* and bad *kamma*

Queen *Padumavatī* had been reborn as a servant for the period between *Kassapa Buddha's* dispensation and that of our *Gotama Buddha*.

One day, when she was chasing away the birds in the paddy-field, she saw a *Paccekabuddha* and was very impressed by him. She offered him five hundred grains of fried rice and a lotus and made four wishes.

May I have sons as numerous as the grains of fried rice offered.
May they all be noble ones who attain the same enlightenment that you have attained.
May I be the most beautiful lady in the country.
As a result of the merit made from offering the lotus, may lotuses bloom under my every step.

When the *Paccekabuddha* was leaving. she, wondering why a *Paccekabuddha* has need of a lotus, rushed to him and asked for it back. She further thought, *if it was useless he would not take it with him. He must have a use of it*. She ran to him, begged for his pardon and offered the lotus back.

In a later life, she was reborn as "*Padumavatī*" and became the queen consort of the king. All her wishes came true. According to her wishes, she was beautiful and lotuses bloomed under every one of her steps. But, as time passed by, the king took less interest in her and all her privileges were revoked. She was told to leave the palace too, and lotuses no longer appeared under her steps. The reason for that bad luck was because she took back the lotus she had offered previously to the *Paccekabuddha*.

But her bad luck did not prevail for long. The king sent for her again after several years and reinstated her as his queen consort with all the appropriate comforts. She had the fortune to regain that privileged life because she had re-offered the lotus to the *Paccekabuddha*. Lotuses bloomed again as they had previously.

(Saddhammālaṅkāra)

Why *Sāmaṇera Nigrodha* was reborn in a low caste

In a previous rebirth, three great persons, namely king *Dharmashoka* in India, king *Devanaṃpiyatissa* in Sri Lanka and the *sāmaṇera,*

Nigrodha, in India had been reborn in a family that made a living by selling honey.

That was a time when there were *Paccekabuddhas*. One day, one *Paccekabuddha* came to their stall in search of honey for medicine because another *Paccekabuddha* was ill. At that time, only the youngest brother was at the stall selling honey. He offered a bowlful of honey to him wishing to be the sole emperor of the whole India. When his two elder brothers came, he told the story of offering honey and requested them to share the merit. The eldest brother, being suspicious of the *Paccekabuddha*, said, "You must have been cheated and given honey to a low-caste person. Now there are low-caste people with shaven heads." The second elder brother said, "We do not want your *Paccekabuddha*, throw him beyond the sea." But later, having listened to the youngest brother's appreciation of virtuous qualities of the *Paccekabuddhas,* they both, with a pure mind, rejoiced in the merit.

In a later life, the youngest brother, who made a wish to become the sole emperor of the whole India, became the great king, Ashoka. The eldest brother, who insulted the *Paccekabuddha* by saying that he could be a low-caste person, was reborn as a low-caste person in a remote village of low-caste people in India. At the age of seven, he ordained, became an *Arahant* and was famously known as Ven. *Arahant Nigrodha.*[13]

The second elder brother, who insulted the *Paccekabuddha* by suggesting that he be thrown beyond the sea, was reborn in Sri Lanka. He was famously known as *Devanaṃpiyatissa.*[14]

So, dear meritorious readers, mind your tongues!

(The Mahāvaṃsa [Great Chronical of the Sinhalese])

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[13] His name, Nigrodha, was given to him because he had been found as an orphan at the foot of a banyan tree (Nigrodha is the Pāḷi term for the banyan tree)

[14] Devanaṃpiyatissa is famous in Sri Lanka as the first king to support the fledgling Buddhasāsana when it came to Sri Lanka

Why Princess *Suvaṇṇatilakā* was reborn as a low-caste girl

In one of her previous rebirths, Princess *Suvaṇṇatilakā* had been reborn in Sri Lanka. Once, she visited Abhayagiri stupa in Anuradhapura with her mother. Her mother went to bring some water to clean the flower-stand,[15] but as *Suvaṇṇatilakā* was too impatient to wait for her, she offered all the flowers to the *Buddha* statue on the dirty stand instead, yet she did it with a pure and pleasant mind. When offering the flowers to the *Buddha* she made a wish to be a lady with an arresting beauty that put suitors into a trance.

When her mother came to find her daughter had already offered all the flowers on the dirty stand she became angry and blamed her, calling her a "low-caste girl." *Suvaṇṇatilakā* became angry too and blamed her mother saying "Only you are the low-caste woman, not me!"

In a later life, she was reborn to a low-caste violinist family in the village of Madura in India and was called "*Suvaṇṇatilakā*." According to her wish, she became as beautiful as a goddess and five princes, who were unable to win her hand in marriage, committed suicide as a result. Finally, she also had to die just because of her beauty.

So never scold your parents and be wise when making your wishes!

(Saddhammālaṅkāra)

Why *Bhikkhu Kalyāṇiya* was boiled to death

Bhikkhu Kalyāṇiya was a resident in the monastery in *Kelaniya*, Sri Lanka. At that time there was a secret affair between the queen consort of King *Kālaṇitissa* and the heir apparent, *Uttiya*. Upon finding out about the affair the king searched for *Uttiya,* wishing to

[15] It's a table-like stone stand and was set in front of *Buddha* statues, stupas, or *Bodhi* trees so that devotees could use it to offer flowers to the shrine.

have him executed. The heir apparent ran away and hid in a remote area where he happened to become the friend of one young boy.

One day *Uttiya*, who wanted to contact the consort, sent a secret message with the boy. The boy managed to enter the palace in the guise of a young *sāmaṇera*. It was customary in the palace to give alms to the Ven. *Kalyāṇiya Mahāthero* every day, as he had been the teacher to the king and the heir apparent. That day the phony young *sāmaṇera* also entered the palace for alms, and the *mahāthero* thought that he must be a friend of the king. Similarly, the king thought that the *sāmaṇera* must have come with the *mahāthero*.

When returning after alms, the king with the consort would escort the *mahāthero* to the entrance of the palace out of respect. That day, when the king was following the *mahāthero* very closely with the consort behind him, the fake *sāmaṇera* dropped the secret message so that the consort could pick it up. Unfortunately, the king heard the sound of it dropping and turned back. Seeing the message, he picked it up and read it. The heir apparent's handwriting was similar to that of the *mahāthero's,* and the king knew the *mahāthero's* handwriting because, formerly, he had been his pupil. On seeing the handwriting, he misunderstood it to be the *mahāthero's* and was furious. He accordingly ordered soldiers to take him and boil him to death in a cauldron of oil.

As the *mahāthero* was an *Arahant,* he sat in the lotus position in the cauldron and searched the past for the reason why this was happening.

He saw that in one of his previous rebirths, as a child he had been a cowherder. One day when he was boiling milk a fly arrived and fell into it. He managed to rescue it. The fly came and fell into it for the second time and once again he took it out. Again, for the third time also the fly came and fell into the milk. This time he was angry and he did not take it out, but merely boiled the milk together with the fly. He understood that his bad *kamma* had come to give its bad result. Understanding that it was inevitable, he attained *parinibbāna* right then and there.

On seeing this, the gods became angry and, in order to destroy the whole country, created a tidal wave — a tsunami. When the big waves were coming to destroy the coastal area of the country, in order to stop the tidal wave, the king took instruction from the royal advisors. He made a beautiful sailing ship, put his pretty daughter aboard and set sail to it so that he might sacrifice his daughter to the sea. No harm came to her and she safely came ashore at *Tissamahārāma*. She was later known as *Vihāra Mahādevī* and would later become the mother of king *Dutthagāmanī*.

So, dear readers, just imagine how powerful even a small bad deed is!

(Saddhammālaṅkāra)

Prince *Sāli's* lover *Asokamālā,* a low-caste girl

King *Dutthagāmanī's* son, Prince *Sāli,* was very interested in offering alms to the *Saṅgha*. But he married a low-caste girl, who was blessed with all feminine beauty, called *Asokamālā.* Due to this marriage, he had to give up his royal family and become a member of hers. It is said that, in the future, Prince *Sāli* will become the only son of *Metteyya Buddha.*[16]

Why *Asokamālā* had to be reborn as a low-caste girl was due to the words of reproach she spoke to her mother in one of her previous rebirths. In that life she had been reborn in Sri Lanka and was called *Sumanā*. As a young girl her mother once admonished her when she saw that *Sumanā* had scattered bits of food on the floor as she ate her meal. Her mother reproved her by saying: "You low-caste girl! Why have you made the floor dirty?" Then *Sumanā* too got angry and blamed her mother in turn saying, "I am not a low-caste girl, only you are, mother!"

As a result of that rebuke to her mother, she was reborn in a low-caste family in this life.

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[16] When *Metteyya Buddha* arises in the future he will be the last *Buddha* to appear in this sacred aeon

(Saddhammālaṅkāra)

Why Ven. *Dāsaka* was reborn to a maid-servant

Ven. *Dāsaka* was reborn to a maid-servant who was in service at the mansion of the famous donor, *Anāthapiṇḍika*. In one of his previous rebirths, he had ordered an *Arahant* to do some service for him and that was the reason for his low rebirth.

Lay people should be cautious not to make *bhikkhus* do their work, either big or small. Give them the utmost honour, which will produce tremendous good results in future lives to come.

(Paramatthadīpanī — The commentary to the Theragātha)

Why *Aḍḍhakāsī Therī* became a courtesan

Aḍḍhakāsī Therī was a very beautiful lady in the city of *Rājagaha*. Because of her stunning beauty, by the king's order, she had been appointed as a courtesan for the entertainment of all the kings and princes. Why she had to live such a mean life was because of some bad *kamma* that was made during *Kassapa Buddha's* time. During that time, she had been a very virtuous *bhikkhunī* who had led an unblemished celibate life. One day, she insulted an *Arahant bhikkhunī* and called her a prostitute. Because of this bad deed, she fell into hell, suffered there for a long time and, later, became a courtesan. She was beautiful due to having led a very good celibate life. Later she ordained and became an *Arahant*. She was the only person to be ordained in a special way which only a *Buddha* can bestow.

(Aḍḍhakāsī Therī Apadāna)

Earlier, well-versed *bhikkhus*; now, powerful *yakkhas*

During *Kassapa Buddha's* time these two inseparable friends were ordained. Because they had been ordained at a young age they studied the *Tipitaka* well. They both had inherited keen wisdom and skill, mastered the *Tipitaka* in a short time and became well-versed and eloquent *bhikkhus*. They not only mastered it very well but also became keen and competent in solving *bhikkhus' Vinaya* matters.

Due to their skill, mastery and fame, they had one thousand *bhikkhus* supporting them — five hundred each. As time passed by, however, they gradually became corrupt and succumbed to ill-gotten gains and benefits from factions of unvirtuous *bhikkhus*.

One day, a serious *Vinaya* matter arose between a moral *bhikkhu* and an immoral *bhikkhu*. While listening to the reasoning of both, they knew very well who had been immoral and was worth disrobing and sending home. So, being partial and greedy for ill-gotten gains and benefits, hiding the *Dhamma-Vinaya* without securing the *Buddha Sāsana* and with no regard for justice, they judged the case in favor of the immoral *bhikkhu*. Therefore, the immoral *bhikkhu* was safe and the moral bhikkhu failed and departed, crying sadly. As a result of the bad judgement, they themselves ruined their celestial journey so that they, with their thousand supporters, were reborn as demons instead.

The eldest bhikkhu was reborn as the demon "*Hemavata*" while his best friend became the demon "*Sātāgira*." Their thousand unvirtuous supporters were also reborn as demon supporters. Their devotees, who had attended to them with the four requisites, were reborn in heaven. Knowing that this had happened. these demons were very ashamed of it.

They could not escape their low realm until the earth grew to one *yojana* and three leagues. But one day, they, with their supporters, were fortunate to listen to a sermon delivered by the *Gotama Buddha* and they all became stream-enterers.

So, wise people, please be heedful to give judgements only in favour of justice itself!

(Hemavata Sutta Vaṇṇanā, Paramatta Jotika — the commentary to the Sutta Nipāta)

The look was stunning, the mouth was stinking

Bhaddā Kapilāni had earlier been young *Pipphali*'s wife (*Pipphali* was the lay name of Ven*. Arahant Mahākassapa*). This story is about a bad deed which bore fruit in one of her previous rebirths. One day, there came to her house a *Paccekabuddha*. At that time, as there

was no food left in the house, her husband's younger sister offered the meal which had been put aside for her elder brother. *Bhaddā Kapilāni* was not happy about it, as she loved her husband very mush. So, she took back the meal from the bowl against her sister's will and kept it for her husband. Her husband again offered the meal by putting it into the bowl. Seeing this, she got angry and threw away the food from the bowl. Next, she filled the bowl with stinking mud and gave it back into the hands of the *Paccekabuddha*. She noticed something special about the *Paccekabuddha's* face, that on both occasions it was alike. That is, when her sister-in-law offered the bowlful of food and then she threw it away and offered a bowlful of mud, the *Paccekabuddha* did not change his mood but stood with the very same calmness, patience and *mettā* as ever. Having noticed this, she was ashamed and moved by it. Finally, she herself washed the bowl with scented water, filled it with a delicious meal of food and offered it back. That *kamma* ripened as being a young woman who had a stinking mouth in a later rebirth.

Pride before a fall

During the time of *Kassapa Buddha*, *Ven. Suppiya* had been reborn to a royal family and also was a well-versed *bhikkhu* in all the three baskets of *Dhamma*. Because of both of these conditions he was conceited, thought highly of himself and looked down upon others. Because of that way of living, in his last life he was reborn into a family of cemetery keepers in the city of *Sāvatthī* and was called *Suppiya*. Later he listened to a sermon from Ven. *Arahant Sopaka,* who had been a friend of his in his lay-life, was then ordained and became an *Arahant.*

Why the *bhikkhu Samitigutta* developed leprosy

In one of his previous rebirths, Ven. *Samitigutta* had insulted a *Paccekabuddha* with a malicious tone and sense saying, "You must be a leper. I think that's why you have covered your body with a cloth and go around like this." Owing to this bad deed, he fell into the *niraya* hell and suffered there for a long, long time.

In *Kassapa Buddha's* time, he had been a *paribbājaka* (wanderer). Getting angry with a virtuous devotee, he cursed him saying: "May you become a leper." What's more, he bore him malice and spoiled the soap at his bathing-place in the river. Once again, he fell into the *niraya* hell, suffered excruciatingly and was reborn in the human world thereafter. He was fortunate to ordain, and while he led his *pabbajjā* life in a good way, he developed leprosy. It went from bad to worse, and as a result his whole body started to rot, emit pus and give out an odour. All this was due to insulting the *Paccekabuddha*, destroying the devotee's soap and cursing him.

One day the Ven. *Arahant* Elder *Sāriputta* visited the sick *bhikkhus* to see how they were getting on. There he saw this suffering *bhikkhu* and gave the following short sermon, including an object for insight meditation.

> ***''āvuso, yāvatā khandhappavatti nāma,***
> ***sabbaṃ dukkhameva vedanā.***
> ***Khandhesu pana asantesuyeva natthi dukkhan'ti"***
>
> "Friend, so long there exist the five aggregates,
> one will experience all suffering.
> In the absence of them,
> all pains will never arise again."

Ven. *Samitigutta* had the wisdom to understand and meditate on this. Finally, he cut the tangle and became one of the *Arahants*.

(The commentary to the Theragātha)

Why Ven. *Ānanda* had been reborn as a woman

Ven. *Arahant Ānanda* had five positions in this *Sāsana*:

1. *Satimantānaṃ aggo* — the foremost among *bhikkhus* who had good memory.
2. *Gatimantānaṃ aggo* — the foremost among bhikkhus who could quickly understand a lot of *Dhamma* according to the *Dhamma* they had heard.
3. *Dhitimantānaṃ aggo* — the foremost among *bhikkhus* in retention of the *Dhamma.*

4. *Bahussutānaṃ aggo* — the foremost among *bhikkhus* who had listened to a lot of *Dhamma* (i.e. who was learned).
5. *Upaṭṭhākānaṃ aggo* — the foremost among attendants.

In one of his previous lives he had been a rich goldsmith who had been strongly addicted to adultery. Subsequently, he was reborn as a son of a noble family where he could associate with good friends, and as a result, made a lot of merit. Unfortunately, however, his unwholesome *kamma* of adultery, which had been done in the life previous to the current one, ripened when he died and he was reborn in the *niraya* hell "*Roruva"* and suffered excruciatingly for a long, long time. After he came out, he was reborn as a big, castrated goat who was harnessed to big carts to draw big, heavy loads. After dying, he was reborn again, in the city of *Dasanta* as a big, castrated beast of burden and worked hard his whole life drawing big, heavy loads for others.

After death, he was reborn again in the city of *Vede* as a hermaphrodite. After death, he was reborn in the heaven *Tāvatiṃsa* as a consort to the deva king, *Sakka,* for three successive rebirths. He became the chief consort to the god *Javana* two times thereafter. After that heavenly life ended, he was reborn in the royal family as a beautiful princess to the queen consort of the king, *Aṅgati*. She was called *Rujā* and made much merit living a celibate life. After death, she was again reborn in the heaven *Tāvatiṃsa* as a splendid and very powerful god.

Therefore, dear meritorious readers, just imagine that even noble people, who had ample *pāramī* power, have committed adultery only to suffer excruciatingly. Let others be! Reflecting on this, avoid committing adultery.

(Mahā Nāradakassapa Jātaka No. 544)

One bad deed, five hundred births of suffering

Once upon a time, there was a great brahmin well-versed in the *Vedas* called *Disāpāmokkha*. He needed to slay a goat for the Feast of the Dead (*Matakabhatta*). He ordered a servant to bring the goat to him, having bathed and adorned it with a garland round its neck.

When the goat was bathed, it happened to spontaneously remember its previous rebirths, after which it suddenly laughed and then cried. Being puzzled, the servant asked the goat the reason why, but the goat kept quiet because he preferred to reveal it before the *brahmin* himself. After he was led to the *brahmin* he announced: "In one of my previous rebirths, I too had been a great *brahmin* called *Disāpāmokkha*, just like you. At that time, I also slaughtered a goat for the same feast that you are now preparing, and by doing that bad deed, I was killed in a similar way for four hundred and ninety-nine rebirths up to the present. This is my last rebirth of suffering for that bad deed and realizing this, I laughed. But sir, you, by doing this bad deed, are also going to suffer in the way I did and that is why I cried."

After hearing that, the brahmin refrained from killing the goat. Later the same day, when the goat was tethered near a rock, a thunder storm arose. Suddenly, a thunder bolt struck the rock and a sharp shard of rock shot off and struck the beast, severing its head from its body.

So, dear readers, please understand the gravity of doing bad deeds!

(Matakabhatta Jātaka — The Jātaka Commentary)

Who had *Bījaka* been?

There is a fascinating account told in the commentary to the *Mahā Nāradakassapa Jātaka*. There once was a king called *Aṅgati* who had a loving daughter called *Rujā*. This was one of the former lives of the *Buddha's* renowned attendant, Ven. *Ānanda,* who had been perfecting his *pāramīs* for one hundred thousand aeons. Princess *Rujā* was able to recall seven rebirths into the past and see seven rebirths into the future.

There was a servant at the palace called *Bījaka*. Princess *Rujā* looked back into his past to see the bad *kamma* which had caused him to be reborn as a servant. *Bījaka* would later, in his last life, become the Ven. Elder *Arahant Moggallāna*. She saw that in one of his previous lives before that he had accused a virtuous *bhikkhu*. That was the bad *kamma* which had led to his rebirth as a servant.

Why Prince *Sāma's* parents became blind

There once was a couple called Prince *Dukūlaka* and Princess *Pārikā.* They were skilled doctors. One day, they both cured a blind person. After healing, the patient did not think much about the promised fee. When the doctor told this to his wife, she asked him to treat the patient again so that he would once more become blind if he didn't pay up. The doctor acted accordingly, and it was that bad *kamma* which made them blind later, when they became the parents of Prince *Sāma* (for reference see the *Sāma Jātaka,* no. 540). Eventually, they would become none other than Ven. *Arahant Kassapa* and Ven. *Arahant Bhikkhunī Bhaddā Kapilāni*.

Why *Bhikkhunī Puṇṇā* was reborn as a servant

Bhikkhunī Puṇṇā was reborn in the city of *Sāvatthī* to a servant family whose job was to supply water. She had been a famous, virtuous and well-versed *bhikkhunī* who had been an eloquent speaker on the *Dhamma* in six dispensations of *Buddhas* before this: *Vipassī Buddha*, *Sikhī Buddha*, *Vessabhū Buddha*, *Kakusandha Buddha*, *Koṇāgamana Buddha* and *Kassapa Buddha*.

Owing to her knowledge and fame she was arrogant and looked down on one virtuous and comely *bhikkhunī*. Because of this bad *kamma*, she was reborn as a maid-servant for a couple of rebirths. In this birth too, she was reborn as a maid-servant as usual. The fruit of her ordination ripened because she had ordained and led very virtuous *bhikkhunī* lives full of merit.

(Puṇṇikātherīapadānaṃ)

The blister on *Metteyya Buddha's* palm

When our *Bodhisatta* had been a king in one of his previous lives, *Metteyya Bodhisatta* had been the mahout of the king's palace, where he tamed and took care of the royal elephants. One day, while the king was riding on the royal tusker's back, the tusker, being intoxicated by the smell of a she-elephant, went on a rampage into the jungle. The king, being unable to stop the elephant's rampage, saved his life by hanging on to a branch of a tree on the way. When

he returned to the palace he summoned the royal mahout and shouted at him for preparing that elephant for the journey. No matter how the mahout explained to the king what must have happened, the king did not believe him.

The tusker stayed some days with the she-elephants and came back to the palace having quenched his lust. After the elephant returned, the mahout showed the king its obedience. The tusker did everything the mahout ordered it to do. Finally, the mahout ordered it to pick up a red-hot iron ball by its trunk and held it until it was ordered to drop. Without delaying a second, the very tame, obedient beast picked up the blazing iron ball, held it with eyes crying, while bearing the tremendous burning pain of the blistering trunk, yet not letting it fall until it was ordered to do so. It demonstrated well to all the people gathered there, including the king, that previously the beast had been in rut, and that is why it had behaved that way, despite being well trained and obedient.

It was the future Ven. *Arahant Mahākassapa* who had been reborn as the tamed, obedient royal tusker at that time. Scriptures have it that *Metteyya Buddha's* dispensation is the fifth and final one to appear in this fortunate aeon (*Bhaddakappa). Metteyya Buddha*, after his great awakening, is due to come to the foot of the great rock, *Vebhāra*, in which Ven. *Kassapa's* dead body lies. When he arrives there with his Arahant disciples, the rock will split itself open, showing the Arahant's body lying inside. The *Buddha*, taking the lifeless body onto his palm, will show it to the others gathered there, giving highest praise of the *thero's* virtue to the disciples. As soon as he finishes, the body will be spontaneously cremated on *Metteyya Buddha's* palm, burning it until a blister appears.

Showing it to all, the *Buddha* will reveal that the bad *kamma* that resulted in the burning of his palm was from the time he hurt the obedient, noble beast in his rebirth as the mahout.

Therefore, understanding that not even the *Buddha* can avoid his bad *kamma*, the wise should always refrain from committing the unwholesome.

Ven. *Arahant Upāli* the barber

Ven. *Arahant Upāli*, who was ordained in the same group as the Ven. *Arahant Anuruddha*, was the *Sakyans'* court barber. He was fortunate to become a great disciple who was foremost in the *Vinaya*. In one of his previous rebirths, he had been reborn as King *Añjasa's* son, prince *Sunanda*. One day, he was riding the royal tusker *Sirika* when he saw a *Paccekabuddha* approaching. He was not pleased to see the *Paccekabuddha*, as he did not show any respect to the prince. He kept walking on without stopping or stepping aside on the road to give him way like his subjects did. So, he bore malice to the *Paccekabuddha* and instructed the tusker to give him a shove on the road. But the beast, understanding the prince's motive, did not move an inch. Even if nothing bad happened visibly, he suddenly started to suffer from a restless irritation over all of his body. Being scared, he had his father, the king, beg pardon from the *Paccekabuddha* on his behalf. But the bad *kamma* it bore was unavoidable. It inevitably gave the fruit that he was reborn as a barber in this last life.

(Thera Apadāna)

Why *Ambapālī* became a courtesan

Ambapālī is said to have been reborn spontaneously in a park of mango trees in the famous city of *Vesāli*. Because of her stunning beauty, by the king's order she had been appointed as a courtesan for the entertainment of all the kings and princes. Why she had to live such a mean life was because of a bad *kamma* that had been made during *Sikhī Buddha's* time. At that time, she had been a virtuous *bhikkhunī*. One day, she reproached an *Arahant bhikkhuni,* saying that she was polluting the dispensation just like a courtesan. Blaming her was like eating a sweet but poisonous fruit! Therefore, due to that bad deed she fell into *niraya* hell and suffered immensely for a long time. Having come out of it, she had to become a courtesan for ten thousand lives.

Finally, she was able to become a bhikkhunī and attained Arahantship.

(Paramatthadīpanī — the commentary to Therīgāthā)

The innocent woman, refused even by a beggar

Isidāsī was reborn as the only daughter of a wealthy merchant in the county of *Avanti*. She had been married to a son of another noble family suitable to their status. Even though she worked as hard, dutifully and frugally as a good house-maid, she was always blamed by her husband. As time passed by, losing interest in her, her husband sent her home.

Isidāsī's father gave her in marriage to another wealthy merchant whom she also loved. No matter how much she loved or worked hard for him, her second husband, too, lost interest in her, just like her first husband and sent her back home.

For want of another choice, her father, seeing a tramp on the way past his house begging, summoned him into the palace and gave her in marriage to him, letting them both stay in that very house. She again loved him a lot and did everything she could to keep him happy. But it was not long before that the tramp too, amidst all the comforts, left her and went away, returning to his usual way of living — begging.

Fie to you, unwholesome *kamma*! Finally, she only thought of either committing suicide or ordaining. But due to her previous *pāramī* power, she became a *bhikkhunī* and attained *Arahantship* with the three knowledges in just seven days.

She surveyed her past with her supra-mundane skills to investigate the bad *kamma* that had led to this situation. Once, she had been a very rich goldsmith in the city of *Erakaccha*. He had been intoxicated with his youthfulness and spent his whole life enjoying a lustful life committing adultery. As a result of it, he was reborn in *niraya* hell and suffered there bitterly.

After coming out of hell, he was reborn as a baby monkey. The leader of the monkeys destroyed his testicles. After dying, he was reborn as a blind and encumbered billy goat who was castrated after being born. Not only that, but he had to suffer from a worm-ridden wound for twelve difficult years. Later, the goat became blind and suffered much from that as well. After dying, he was reborn as a

hermaphrodite slave who only lived to the age of thirty, before being reborn to a very poor family. She had to suffer in all of those lives as a result of committing adultery.

Then she married a young cart-owner named *Giridāsa,* who already had another wife. She hated the first wife and performed a secret kind of black magic called the "*Viddesana kamma,*"[17] so that he might hate his old wife and love her instead. As a result of that despicable bad deed, no matter how she adored her husband in all the lives thereafter, her husband would become fed up with her. No matter how she loved her husband he did not love her back. No matter how hard she worked in the house, he blamed her.

Finally, all the husbands became bored with her — even the beggar who went begging on the road. Therefore, dear meritorious readers, please avoid unwholesome kamma as much as possible.

(Therīgāthā commentary, Cattālīsanipāta – Isidāsī Therī)

Sunīta **the scavenger**

In this life he was called *Sunīta* and in one of his previous rebirths he had been a mischievous lad. One day, seeing a *Paccekabuddha* going on his alms round, he asked: "Why are you walking about having covered your whole body like a wounded person? Why can't you engage in some livelihood like farming? If there is no other way available, why don't you make your living by cleaning others' cesspits?"

He himself fell into *niraya* hell owing to that abuse. Having come out of it, he was reborn as a scavenger-cum-cesspit cleaner for hundreds of rebirths thereafter.

In our *Gotama Buddha's* time, he was reborn in the city of *Rājagaha* and became a scavenger-cum-cesspit cleaner. When the Most Compassionate One saw his *pāramī* power, he ordained him. Ven. *Sunīta* meditated hard and before long became an *Arahant* with the

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[17] "*Viddesana kamma*" — By performing this curse on a wife, the husband will then become sick of her

special fourfold knowledge. He was respected and worshipped by gods and brahmas.

(Paramatthadīpanī—The commentary to the Theragātha)

Why Ven*. Arahant Mogharāja* had leprosy

Ven. *Mogharāja* was reborn in a royal family in our *Gotama Buddha's* time. After becoming an Arahant, he was declared as the foremost *bhikkhu* to wear rough robes. He became the king after his grandfather's demise, but later developed leprosy and so felt that his kingly comforts were useless and empty *(Ārogya paramā lābhā* — health is the greatest gain, *Dhp 204*). He was known as *Mogharāja* because his leprosy was incurable.

He suffered from leprosy because of his bad *kamma*. In *Padumuttara Buddha's* time he had been a *bhikkhu* who had set fire to the floor of the *Saṅgha* refectory. After death, he suffered in *niraya* hell for thousands of years. After that, whenever he had a human birth, even if he had been reborn in a high-caste, he would have a number of scars or birthmarks, big and small, all over his body.

In this last rebirth he also suffered greatly from leprosy.

(Mogharājatthera Apadāna)

Why Ven. *Arahant Dabbamallaputta* was falsely accused

Ven. *Arahant Dabbamallaputta* ordained at the age of seven and became an *Arahant* before long. Even though he never had any relationship with a woman, not even in dream, a *bhikkhuni* called *Mettiyā* complained to the *Buddha* that he had raped her. Not only that but the bhikkhus of the 'group of six' falsely charged him several times for immature behaviour.

The reason for all this was, according to the *Apadāna* in the *Khuddaka Nikāya*, when he had been a *bhikkhu* in *Vipassī Buddha's sāsana*, he had purposely insulted a very virtuous, impeccable *bhikkhu* as being immoral.

A devotee who became a crocodile in the river of Mahāweli

The devotee *Mahāvācakāla* lived in the village *Antaragaṅgāya* in Sri Lanka. He was a meritorious devotee who had meditated on the object of the 'thirty-two repulsive parts of the body' for thirty years, with the intention of becoming a stream-enterer. But as his *pāramī* power had not yet matured, he did not get even a glimpse of the light of concentration.

Subsequently, he fell into the wrong view that the Buddha's dispensation did not lead anyone to attain *Nibbāna*, gave up all his meditations and renounced the *Buddha-Dhamma*. He remembered this at his dying moment and was reborn as an unusually large crocodile in the *Mahāveli* river. One day, he came to a place called *Kacchakatittha* as he was looking for food. Seeing sixty carts laden with stone pillars crossing the river at that place, it is said that he swallowed all of them, including bullocks, carts and pillars but still could not overcome his hunger.

The weightiest unwholesome *kamma* according to Buddhism is getting into wrong views. This *kamma* is weightier than the five weighty *kammas*. The bearers of views like this, without fail, fall into the *niraya hell* "*Avīci*" and have to suffer more excruciatingly than the doers of the five weighty *kamma* do there.

So, let's make a solemn vow not to get into wrong views until we attain the supreme bliss of *Nibbāna*.

('Manorathapūraṇi' — the commentary to the Aṅguttara Nikāya)

Uggasena the acrobat

Once, Uggasena, the son of a banker who lived in the city of *Rājagaha*, went to watch an acrobatic show. He fell in love at first sight with a skilled and beautiful acrobat in the show according to his *saṃsāric* bond. After the show, he went home and urged his parents to give him permission to marry that acrobat girl.

They declined, so he refused to eat his meals and fasted until they would relent and give their permission. His parents did everything

possible to change his mind but all was in vain. Eventually, they conceded defeat and gave their permission to let him marry the girl. As the marriage took place solely due to his wish, he had to go everywhere the girl and the troop of five hundred acrobats went, and because he did not know any of their arts himself, he became their porter, carrying their baggage.

As time passed by, they had a son, and his wife got into the habit of lulling the baby by singing sarcastically to a tune: "Cry not, porter's baby, cry not... etc." to purposely insult him. Over time, this hurt his feelings and broke his heart. He left her and joined another group of acrobats, learned their art and before long became an accomplished tumbler.

One day, he went to the city of *Rājagaha* to do a show amidst a large crowd of spectators. There, he performed his skills on a bamboo pole sixty-cubits high. At the same time the *Buddha*, knowing all about him and seeing that his *pāramī* power had matured enough to become an *Arahant*, came to the performance with a large *Saṅgha*. By his psychic power, he directed all the audience's attention so that it would be on him and not on the skilled performer. Understanding that his spectators had suddenly lost their interest in his performance, he became somewhat disappointed.

Seeing the performer's frame of mind, the *Buddha* gave a *Dhamma* talk to Ven. *Arahant Moggallāna* in a way that *Uggasena* could listen and understand. At the end of the talk, eighty-four thousand beings gained benefit from it, and *Uggasena* became an *Arahant* with the fourfold special knowledge while he still stood poised on the tip of the bamboo pole. When he got down, he went to the *Buddha* and ordained. His wife, too, became a *bhikkhunī* saying, "If my husband's living is one way, mine should be the same." Before long, she became an *Arahant* as well.

At a later time, the *Buddha*, as requested, revealed the past *kamma* of the couple who had perfected *pāramīs* enough to become *Arahants,* yet lived their lives performing as acrobats.

In *Kassapa Buddha's* dispensation, devotees were busy erecting the golden stupa to enshrine the *Buddha's* sacred relics. This couple also went to the site of the golden stupa by a carriage endowed with lots of food and refreshments. On their way, they saw an *Arahant* going on his mendicant round, they offered him alms, making a wish to attain the same enlightenment that the *Arahant* had attained. The *Arahant bhikkhu* smiled, as he could foresee that their wish would come true in the future. Seeing the *Arahant's* smile, the wife told her husband in a low voice, "Dear, our *bhikkhu* smiled at our wish. He must have been some kind of actor." The husband agreed with this saying, "Must be so, dear" and they set off for the site.

After death, they were reborn in heaven and enjoyed lots of divine comforts. Next, they both were reborn in the human world in the period of our *Buddha*. The woman, as a result of the bad kamma of insulting an *Arahant bhikkhu*, was reborn in a poor family that made its living by tumbling. The man was reborn to a noble family and they both fell in love due to the *saṃsāric* influence. But as a result of his bad *kamma*, done by agreeing with his wife's insult in the past, he too had to give up all his comforts and go as a porter everywhere that the troop of acrobats went.

So, everyone must avoid finding fault with others and insulting them.

The story of the floating baby

This is another story that well illustrates the results of good and bad *kamma*. After *Kassapa Buddha* attained *parinibbāna,* devotees decided to erect a golden stupa one *yojana* high enshrining the *Buddha's* relics. While construction was underway, one *Arahant* went to the house of a goldsmith in order to collect some gold for the *stupa.* At just that time, the goldsmith happened to be angry and fighting with his wife. The *Arahant* informed him that there was not enough gold to finish constructing the stupa. The goldsmith, who was already irritated with his wife, retorted to the *Arahant*, "Throw your teacher into the water and go away."

Then his wife told her husband, "Just blame me if you are angry with me, it is wrong and unfair to blame the *Buddhas*." Upset by the

admonishment and realizing his own fault, the goldsmith apologized and asked for forgiveness from the *Arahant* for his mistake. The *bhikkhu* advised him to take his apology to the *Buddha* and the goldsmith asked him how he should go about doing that. The *bhikkhu* instructed that he should make three bunches of flowers out of gold, enshrine them in the stupa and apologise to the *Buddha* with a wet head of hair.

Thus advised, the goldsmith started to make the bunches of flowers out of gold, but he was in need of help in order to make them quickly. So, he asked his eldest son for some assistance, but he refused saying, “Father it was you who was at fault, so you yourself should make amends.” He asked his second son and he too gave the same response. But when he finally asked his youngest son, he came willingly to help, thinking, “What comes the parents’ way falls to their sons’ way as well.” They both made the golden flowers and enshrined them inside the stupa as an apology to the *Buddha*.

The fruit of his bad *kamma* followed him for seven lives thereafter. In each of those lives he was thrown into water on the day of his birth. In this final life, he was reborn in the city of *Benares* to the treasurer’s daughter. Because he had been born as a result of his mother’s illicit relations with a *Vijjādhara*, a person who could travel through the air by means of magic, she could not keep the baby. The treasurer’s daughter ordered one of her servants to bring a vessel and put the new born baby into it without even removing the umbilical cord and placenta. Covering the container very well and decorating it with garlands so that no one would suspect it, she floated the baby down the river Ganges, telling her attendants that she was keeping a vow to a deity.

Two women who were having a bath downriver saw the baby, and one woman agreed to take him home and bring him up. The baby was named “*Jaṭila*” because he had curled and knotted hair. This woman was a devotee of Ven. *Arahant Mahākaccāyana*. So, she handed the baby to the *thero* to ordain him, but as the baby was too small to ordain and was blessed with a very meritorious lay life *Bhante,* handed it over to another family of devotees. That family

nurtured the baby in a caring way. Understanding he had great merit, they later gave their daughter in marriage to him when he was at a marriageable age. The newly married couple moved in to a new house and on the day of their house warming ceremony, due to the young man's merit, an eighty-cubit high golden rock appeared in the east of the new house. When the king heard about it, the young man was awarded the position of treasurer — the treasurer with never-ending wealth.

The treasurer *Jaṭila* had three children. When his children reached adulthood, *Jaṭila* had the intention of becoming ordained, so he called all three of them to give them a test to see who could manage the treasurership. First, he gave his eldest son a dagger with a diamond blade and asked him to bring a lump of gold cut from the rock. He went and struck it with the dagger, but no matter how hard he tried to pry a chunk off it, every blow he gave was just like hitting a block of stone. He came back having failed. *Jaṭila* then gave the same test to his second son and the result was the same. Finally, he gave the test to the youngest one, who went there and managed to cut lumps off it as easily as if he were cutting off lumps of clay. This event was related to the former life where the two elder sons had not helped him to make those three golden bunches of flowers, but the youngest son had.

The treasurer *Jaṭila* then called the three princes and explained, "This rock of gold has not appeared for my elder sons. It is only due to the merit of the youngest son and myself. So, live happily and be united sharing that wealth with your youngest brother." After advising them in such a way, he went to the monastery, ordained and become an *arahat* within a few days.

So, all good children must help their parents in all their good tasks, no matter big or small.

All the above-mentioned bad *kamma* results are regarding *bhikkhus*, *bhikkhunīs*, as well as male and female devotees. Accounts of the twelve unwholesome *kamma* results of the *Buddha*, all made during his *Bodhisatta* lives, are relayed below to convey the inevitability of bad results from bad *kamma*. Even the *Buddha,* who appears in the

world for the benefit of humans, gods and *brahmas,* cannot live without experiencing the fruits of his own bad *kamma*.

The twelve bad deeds that later afflicted the *Buddha*

The *Pubbakammapilotika Apadāna* has it that once, at the great lake of *Anotatta*, the *Buddha*, in front of five hundred *bhikkhus*, revealed twelve unwholesome *kammas* from the past whose results afflicted him in that, his final, life.

1. In one of his previous bodhisatta lives, the Buddha had been a rake called Munāḷi who insulted the Paccekabuddha Surabhi. After he became the Buddha, he too was falsely accused by people because the female wanderer Sundarī visited the monastery at unsuitable times.
2. Once, the bodhisatta was a learned brahmin and falsely accused a virtuous sage called Bhīma of being a hedonist. As a result of that, many insults were directed to the Tathāgatā and the Saṅgha for seven days, falsely accusing them of raping, killing and then burying the female wanderer Sundarī in a garbage heap of withered flowers nearby the Gandhakuṭi.
3. There was an Arahant called Nanda in the period of Sabbābibhū Buddha. Our bodhisatta, as the drunkard Munāḷi, abused the Arahant, accusing him of being a person leading a life of indulgence. The Bodhisatta committed this bad deed more than four incalculables and a hundred thousand aeons ago. This means that it was even before he was granted the definite prophecy that he would attain Buddhahood. Even after the long duration necessary to become a Buddha, however, that kamma had not been fully exhausted. Abuse was directed to him due to the young woman Ciñcamāṇavikā who, while the Buddha was delivering a sermon, came in the guise of a pregnant woman alleging that the Buddha was the father.
4. Because of pure greed for wealth and assets, our Bodhisatta had murdered his own brother by pushing a big rock to fall upon him and throwing another big stone on the then fallen

brother. As a result of that he had had to go through many afflictions. In his last rebirth, Devadatta, his brother-in-law, also pushed a big rock so that it would fall onto the Tathāgatā.

5. In one life, when the Bodhisatta was a child, he threw a stone at a Paccekabuddha who was walking on the road. As a result of that bad kamma, bhikkhu Devadatta employed archers to shoot and kill the Buddha.
6. In one life, when the Bodhisatta was riding an elephant, intoxicated by his own glory, he made the elephant charge a Paccekabuddha to kill him, but the Paccekabuddha lifted himself into the air and departed unscathed. Because of that, in his last life the royal tusker Nāḷāgirī charged the Tathāgatā to kill him.
7. Bhikkhu Devadatta was very angry with the Buddha and made various attempts to kill him but failed. He was even angry at the failure of his attempts. One day, he climbed onto the famous rock named "Gijjakūṭa." That day the Buddha was walking in meditation at its foot when bhikkhu Devadatta pushed a big stone onto him. Because of his immense pāramī power and merit, however, a larger rock emerged from the ground and held the rolling rock back. A sharp shard broke off from the impact, though, and struck the Buddha, wounding his thumb, causing it to bleed and causing great pain. The royal doctor, Jīvaka, removed the shard, cleaned the wound and treated it so that it could heal. This happened because of a bad deed done in one of his Bodhisatta lives. When he had been a king he had for some reason killed a man. This was the unwholesome action he had done to sustain that injury.
8. The Buddha suffered from an incurable headache. This was because in one life he had been reborn in a village of fishermen. One day when he saw a big catch of fish on the shore, writhing and thrashing this way and that in pain as they died, he smiled at them. His headache was due to that kamma. All his relatives in that life became relatives in his

last life as well, and as a result of the bad deeds they did in catching fish, they all were slaughtered at the hand of Prince Viḍūḍabha.

9. The Tathāgatā's disciples and devotees abide in all the three worlds — human, Deva and Brahma. But during his twelfth Vassa period he did not get even one single grain of rice. The Tathāgatā, with another five hundred bhikkhus, had to live on barley, which was food for horses. This was due to one life where he made an unwholesome kamma by disparaging Phussa Buddha, saying: "You're fit to eat barley, not rice."
10. The Buddha had incurable back pain. When he was suffering from it while giving a Dhamma talk, he would assign Ven. Arahant Sāriputta to carry on in his place. The reason for this was that he had been a wrestler in a past life who, in one wrestling match, had broken the back of his opponent.
11. Once, the Bodhisatta had been a doctor and treated one treasurer. After the treatment was over the treasurer did not pay the promised fee. Getting angry with him, the doctor gave him strong laxatives so that he would suffer from dysentery. The treasurer was scared, paid the promised fee, and eventually was cured. This bad kamma bore the fruit that the Buddha had to suffer severely from dysentery during the last days of his last life.
12. Our Gotama Buddha had to strive for six hard years practicing painful, ignoble and unbeneficial self-mortification. This was also because of a bad kamma. During the time of Kassapa Buddha our bodhisatta had been reborn as a brahmin called Jotipāla. When his friend Ghaṭikāra praised the Buddha, he insulted the Buddha Kassapa, not believing his Buddhahood, saying: "What Buddhahood is there in that bald-headed monk? Buddhahood is very, very rare." That resulted in him having to carry out six years of self-mortification before his enlightenment.

So, dear meritorious readers, just imagine the extent: the *Buddha* had so much power, such a large retinue, including humans, gods and brahmas, so much virtue, so many psychic powers and so much *pāramī* power — beyond compare. Yet, if even he could not escape from the clutches of his own bad *kamma,* what about we who are lacking everything mentioned above. Therefore, do not do anything that may be regretted later. Never do anything harmful lest it may affect others in any way bad.

Dear meritorious readers, try and be one who never harms others but heals others' heavy hearts. Do not cheat or hurt anyone. Try and be a person who does good with all five faculties. Always reflect on what you do, think and speak. Speak only the truth, no matter how hard it is. Do not do evil by word, deed or thought.

Dear readers, even for a flower it is not enough to have only colour — to have a pleasing fragrance that pervades all directions is also important. In a similar way, be a pretty and fragrant flower. Be a good person with kindness, goodness and a healthy mind. You know, we can see trees everywhere on this planet, but it is rare to see a sandalwood tree. They are exceptional. Similarly, even if there are a lot of stones everywhere, precious gems are hard to find. There are a lot of elephants everywhere, but elephants with pearls in their tusks are very rare as well.

Likewise, even though there are a lot people in this world, people who are grateful, who do not do mean things and who do not hurt others physically or emotionally are very rare. Therefore, dear meritorious readers, try to be like a sandalwood tree among other ordinary trees. Try to be like an elephant that has pearls in its tusks among other ordinary elephants. Try to be like a precious gem among other valueless stones.

Lastly, dear meritorious readers, please determine to be humble people with hearts of gold who, while living with others, win their hearts and respect while helping them to ease their worries.

May the triple gem bless you all!!!

Ciraṃ tiṭṭhatu Saddhammo — Sammā Sambuddha-sāsanaṃ!!!

Sataṃ samāgamo hotu — yāva Nibbāna pattiyā!!!